

DRAMA CRITIQUE

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEATRE ARTS AND LITERATURE

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Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor, DRAMA CRITIQUE, Mercy College, 8200 West Outer Drive, Detroit 19, Michigan. All manuscripts should conform to the Chicago Manual of Style.

Advertising inquiries should be addressed to Brother Julius Herbert, F.S.C., Christian Brothers College, St. Louis, Missouri.

DRAMA CRITICISM IN CATHOLIC PUBLICATIONS

By GABRIEL STAPLETON, S.D.S.

Max Beerbohm has pointed out in one of his essays that the welfare of an art is affected by its critics. Good critics are good for it; bad critics are bad for it. It is fitting, then, to consider what critics in Catholic newspapers and magazines are doing for the art of the theatre. Very little notice has been paid to this group of critics who have an effect upon the taste and judgment of theatre-going Catholics. How significant this effect is upon the Catholic public and how significant it is in relation to the art of the theatre itself cannot, perhaps, be measured. It is an area for a dissertation, and one which, as far as we know, has not been explored.

Meanwhile, it will be of interest to spotlight some of the better critics with a sampling of some excellent reviews selected by the editors of *Drama Critique*. We do not mean to suggest that this exhausts the list of good Catholic critics since we have taken but a representative few, which are intended to throw the "breed" into focus, to stir up interest in the quality of such criticism, and to pave the way toward further study of the critics' work and its effects upon the art of theatre in the United States. Meanwhile, we can make a tentative judgment in examining the reviews which follow as to the quality of the criticism. The judgment of your editors is that the quality is of excellent caliber.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE reviewed by George E. Ryan in THE PILOT, Boston, February 11, 1961.

After more than a year of earnest controversy, the sort engendered in the past by Graham Greene and Archibald ("JB") MacLeish, the novel that was *The Devil's Advocate* has now reached the Colonial Theater stage.

Because it deals in an investigation into alleged sanctity, and because it touches such vital religious issues as faith, grace, personal holiness, and salvation, this is a play of particular appeal for Catholics.

But it is, too, a play that "dares" to dramatize the humanity of the clergy, their weaknesses and occasional patches of spiritual dryness as well as their more familiar qualities. Because it does this, and treats a supposed saint and his common-law wife in the bargain, it was a controversial novel and will surely be a controversial play.

What Morris West had in mind was to chronicle the slow achievement of priestly satisfaction and personal holiness of a cold, methodical, and acutely intelligent prelate dying of cancer. Both Mr. West and Dore Schary, who adopted the book for the stage, are fascinated by Msgr. Blaise Meredith and the role he plays of Vatican Official assigned to find reasons why the late Giacomo Nerrone should not be nominated for sainthood.

In preparing his case, Msgr. Meredith meets Nerrone's circle: his lover and their son Paolo, an agnostic Jewish doctor, the Calabrese bishop, a parish priest,

a homosexual painter, and an expatriated English countess once in love with Nerrone. Strange as they seem, these people are the cross section of humanity who pull Msgr. Meredith out of his ivory tower and into touch with life.

The Devil's Advocate is rich—perhaps too rich—in details of plot and subplot, storyline, and tantalizing tangents. It is never clear which is Mr. Schary's prime interest as a dramatist: the rediscovery of Msgr. Meredith's spiritual vigor or the definition of Nerrone's sanctity.

For this reason the play, though it may be a skilled rendition of the novel, is needlessly diffuse as a vehicle for the theater, a situation almost hopelessly complicated by overuse of the flashback technique. And even this mechanical ailment is aggravated by the equally fervent pursuit of Meredith's and Nerrone's stories; the author will have to choose one over the other if he is to emerge with a tight, neatly packaged play.

True to the original, Mr. Schary has given us a host of sharply etched characters, including the efficient Cardinal Marotta in Rome, the eminently practical Bishop of Valenta (Eduardo Ciannelli), who would rather have a corps of nursing nuns than another church that wouldn't be filled, the tipling Father Anselmo, and Msgr. Meredith himself, wonderfully realized by Leo Genn.

Edward Mulhare is the enigmatic Nerrone, only faintly suggesting the inner fire and resolve of a man who may have been both sinner and saint. His sweetheart is Tresa Hughes, proud and protective of her lover's memory and vaguely fearful that he may be actually beatified. Olive Deering is the vengeful Contessa whose facade of gentility conceals the inner conflicts of love, hate, and dread that she may be doomed. The unhappy painter and Paolo are played, respectively, by Michael Kane and Dennis Scoppo.

More than any play of its kind since *The Potting Shed*, *The Devil's Advocate* is both provocative and stimulating theater. More than this, it is also an appropriate foray, in theatrical terms, into theology, human relations, the interweaving of sin and sanctity, and the like.

If it can only narrow its focus and zoom in on the complex Msgr. Meredith, without destroying the Nerrone circle that rescues him, *The Devil's Advocate* will be a rare theatrical experience indeed.

PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT reviewed by Richard A. Duprey in the January 1961 issue of THE CATHOLIC WORLD.

Tennessee Williams is still a man who asks too little of love. In his newest creation for the theater, *Period of Adjustment*, which has been hailed by many as presaging a "new" Williams, we find a work still unfulfilled as a search for the level of life he seems so driven to seek. Though he has changed his range from aberration and perversion to a relatively prosaic heterosexualism and all the characters are married, Williams has changed only in what appears to be a grinning satisfaction that his characters have found a resolution of relative happiness. Again we see a playwright content to work out man's problems on one of the brilliantly executed beds that stage designer, Jo Mielziner, seems so readily to supply.

This play, like the others, gives no indication that its creator has seen or would recognize any sort of love beyond the purely physical. He persists in manifesting a childlike entrancement with the Freudian ideology though the world has long since matured sufficiently to realize that, though Freud has his value, he is not necessarily gospel.

In this play, dealing with the adjustment of a newly married couple as sex partners and an older couple's readjustment to one another in a vaguely analogous way, Williams has calmed down considerably and betrays far less hysteria in his search for the meaning of life. He relaxes enough to toss a satiric brickbat at society here and there and to keep his work basically comic.

Like the cinema's formidable new artist, Ingmar Bergman, Williams sings as he searches, and the song, mistaken for an answer, is thought by many, perhaps even the writer himself, to constitute a formal opinion of life's mysteries, whereas in reality it is barely an hypothesis. Williams is a sack of questions . . . good questions, searching and elegantly stated questions, eschatological questions digging deep beneath the rubble that contemporary life and thought have become.

For the time being, the artist Williams is still seeking the meaning of life in the gospel according to the prophet Sigmund (Freud). He seems relatively sure that it is to be found there. *Period of Adjustment* is a lull in William's earlier search of the clear skies of innocence. In the play's apparent sexual adjustment, he seems to find an area of answer and order. The fierce search for innocence has slowed to a languorous mating dance.

If one is to accept the writer of *Period* as a true "new" Williams, it would be, to this critic's mind, an unfortunate thing, for until Williams really finds life's meaning, any slackening of pace, any period of calm will further hold back what many of us hope to be a monstrous evolution toward the truth in the mind of this powerful artist. If Williams is willing to stop with this play and its pat conservative answer, we have lost an artistic giant and gained a pretentious George Axelrod. If the relative coziness of the connubial bed is equated with the answer Williams has sought through his blazing earlier plays, then we may look back with longing to the sincerity of his incest-cannibalism-homosexuality stage of development.

There are reasons for optimism. One can hope from a few signs scattered throughout this amusing though erotic comedy that the search will continue. Moreover, though Williams has mistaken the narrow range of sex for the terrible breadth of love, there are other elements of magnitude in the play. For example, one of the characters states that man is born under a question mark posing three great questions: "Where did we come from? Why? Where are we going?" Though the thought is hardly original, the fact that we find it in this boudoir piece indicates a further goal as yet unattained. At a second act curtain, when the nervous bride clasps a statue of the Infant of Prague and speaks of her loneliness to Him, we see in Williams a hint of the further possibilities of love, though he remains, to be sure, the same old sloppily sentimental playwright of *Rose Tattoo* and *Camino Real*.

To those who would write off *Period of Adjustment* as mere comedy, signifying nothing, we should note the fallacy that considers comedy in this light. Out of our contemporary failing to distinguish comedy from her younger sister, farce, we are deluded into thinking comedy does not deal with serious matter. Real comedy is always serious in object, if not in technique. Williams is so sincere a playwright that even his most commercial efforts have always searched, probed, thrust away at the soft underbelly of our neurotic world.

The language of *Period* is erotic. Conversation that belongs (if anywhere) in a G.I. latrine and actions proper to the privacy of a marital bedchamber are injected, one suspects, for purely sensationalistic effect. Williams doesn't need this to gain a hearing. He doesn't, that is, unless his fine talent has been reduced to scribbling on rest-room walls.

Whatever is said of this play and whatever direction the so-called "new" Williams takes, he remains a glowing ember of controversy in the theatrical grab bag. He is a poser of questions, a seeker for answers, and a wanderer over the hard surface of truth who cannot yet break through the crust of the apparent to the real. As one who manifests he is being pursued by "the Hound of Heaven," perhaps, this is but a "period of adjustment" and, if he does not become spiritually and artistically complacent, we may someday see a really "new" Williams spring forth. Before this happens, however, there is a need for a sharpening of perception and a hailstorm of grace.

Period of Adjustment, for all its high hopes, answers no questions, asks but a few, and does not really change our tiger. He still burns brightly in the dark loneliness of spiritual night.

PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT reviewed by Alice Delaney in the VICTORIAN, February, 1961.

Tennessee Williams has labeled this play "a serious comedy." Many viewers will judge this description to be an abuse of language. At any rate, the three unities of ancient Greek drama are rigorously observed, but unfortunately the soul of drama—action and conflict—are non-existent. The entire play is stalled from the opening curtain to the closing of the same.

The stale characters, concerned about castration complexes, nymphomaniac compulsions, frigidity, and narcissism chew on the crusts of their several frustrations through three static acts, noisily venting their neuroses before an audience wondering vaguely when something is going to happen. A few dirty, mildewed, GI jokes and reminiscences revolving about prostitution, in-lawism, and a nervous disorder round out the play.

Williams has probably called his play serious because the dead weight of sexual sickness presses down upon it; comic because the final curtain rings down on the two couples in bed hoping for marital adjustment. A terrible, hideous sickness—the total absence of even a shadow of human affection and love—turns this domestic mish-mash into a decadent theatrical corpse.

Those who like the newest game in social relations, *adjustment*, will probably find this play interesting; those who want credible human beings on stage are apt to wonder how in heaven's name a healthy theatre could possibly support such an insignificant piece.

One thing should be noted. *Period of Adjustment* establishes the craftsmanship of Mr. Williams beyond cavil. Only a genius could make so empty a vehicle endurable. Williams does this. He is able to electrify nothingness with noon radiance. He makes meaninglessness seem important. He manipulates inactive posturing and gives it the illusion of hypomaniacal activity. He clothes aimless chatter in the raiments of conversation. Truly, Williams is a theatrical magician. If only he had something to say!

HERE COME THE CLOWNS reviewed by Theophilus Lewis and reprinted from AMERICA, October 15, 1960.

Philip Barry's drama, currently in revival at Actor's Playhouse, shows few signs of aging in the twenty-two years since its original production. Indeed, it has hardly aged at all. It is the kind of play which, had it been written in 38 B.C. instead of 1938 our era, would still be intensely interesting to modern theatre-goers.

Dan Clancy, while continually harassed by Satan, is persistent in his search for the answer to the riddle of the universe. The specific object of his search is one Mr. Concannon, a former benefactor. Dan believes that Mr. Concannon, if he can be found, can explain the meaning of why the innocent suffer and why evil is rife in the world. But Mr. Concannon has gone away somewhere and never appears in the drama. Meanwhile, Dan meets Satan face to face, and that affable gentleman is both willing and ready to answer the questions with pat sophistries.

It is obvious that the resemblance of *Here Come the Clowns* to your recently lauded *J. B.* is so close that comparison is difficult to avoid. Your observer would say the less pretentious Barry play is richer in drama. Dan is seeking a simple answer to a complex question and doesn't get a definitive answer. The author of the Book of Job gave his story a happy ending, but no parish priest would take that easy way out. Barry merely asks the question, a good one for any thoughtful mind to ask occasionally, and lets the matter stand where he found it.

Eddie Dowling played the Clancy role when the play was unveiled, and his performance is one of your reviewer's treasured memories. Mr. Dowling can rest assured that Robert Mandan's portrayal of the character follows the Dowling pattern. Only its creator could give a more authentic rendering of the role.

Other performances deserve high praise, but individuals cannot be mentioned for shortage of space rather than lack of merit. Quartet Productions, Kurt Hale and Paula Scott are the producers. Boyd Dumrose designed the settings, and Sue Spector supervised the costumes. Each and all deserve applause for their efforts. Mark Schoenberg deserves louder applause for his intelligent directing.

SEVEN PLAYS reviewed in THE CRITIC, February-March, 1961 by Leo Brady.

Seven Plays by Michel de Ghelderode. Was Judas henpecked? Did St. Peter wring the neck of the cock who timed his denial? Did Barabbas, freed by popular acclamation, turn to the still-imprisoned Christ and say: "It's not my fault. No hard feelings"?

These startling images are to be found in a play called *Barabbas*, one of seven plays by Michel de Ghelderode (Hill and Wang, \$4.50), a volume of translations by George Hauger of the work of a Belgian Catholic playwright not previously widely known in this country. Ghelderode (hard G) is scarcely, at the age of sixty-two, a new playwright, and most of these plays date from the 'Twenties, and yet the notes struck throughout are highly contemporary in their stress on the bizarre and the absurd. *Barabbas* is the best play in the collection but the other six are all impressive, each in its own way, and all are articulations of a genuine dramatic voice. It seems to me not too much to say that Ghelderode is the best of all the specifically Catholic playwrights of the twentieth century.

Barabbas carries off superbly what few artists (playwrights or other) have been able to do: it makes the events of Good Friday seem fresh; reading the play, you may have the feeling of those who were contemporaneous with Christ (seeing it, since it is entirely theatrical, might redouble this effect). To revivify such well-known occurrences is a considerable feat due to the lamentable fact that we often become familiar with the history of the passion and death of Our Lord before we are able to understand what it is we are familiar with, and the impact is always in danger of being muted. Ghelderode's play illuminates the Redemption, not by directly attacking the supernatural event itself, but by filling in, with naturalistic detail, the outlines of the human beings who participated in the transcendent happenings; hence, the sort of commonplace traits attributed to Judas and Peter and Barabbas. The playwright's ruthless, mocking style results in a work both terrifying and Catholic; it is no surprise to be told by Ghelderode (in an interview which prefaces the plays in this book) that he was frowned on by Henri Gheon, a French playwright, who, with a temperament opposite to Ghelderode's, tried to capture the ineffable by means of sweetness and gentleness. Their encounter must have been like one between a Therese of Lisieux and Teresa of Avila—two of God's utterly different children.

In his awareness of man's bewilderment, Ghelderode is modern to the point of being "beat," but he is medieval in his immunity to the sentimental. He is like a thirteenth-century playwright set down in the present time with all his medieval sensibilities: conscious of corruption but not preoccupied with it; sensitive to absurdity but not driven to sardonic despair by it: Sartre with the gift of faith. Ghelderode writes with an awful serenity of death and human incomprehension. His characters reel and stagger among the mysteries but they are at home. They really do see as in a glass darkly, and Ghelderode never invades them with comfort beyond their capabilities. He never tries to embroider or falsify or italicize; he is content to be—and gifted enough to be—merely accurate, level after profound level.

An off-Broadway production of *Barabbas* is contemplated for the Spring—not in the Hauger translation, but in another by Hugh Dickinson of Loyola University, who, with his college actors, first produced the play in America. Whether

a production of the ordinary off-Broadway caliber can encompass Ghelderode is dubious: he deserves decor by Roualt, direction by Ingmar Bergman, and music by Bela Bartok.

The other plays are to *Barabbas* as small jewels around a central stone. *Chronicles of Hell* is a grotesque of a venal clergyman in "bygone Flanders" and is probably more sensational than anything else. It looks like that sort of interesting literary conception which would never properly come off on the stage, though Jean-Louis Barrault staged it in Paris in 1949 when Ghelderode's international reputation was beginning. Eric Bentley, an American critic, thought it gave off a "whiff of Satanic sulphur" but this is probably a Protestant reaction. Ghelderode himself, lapped in his medieval sophisticated naivete, is quoted as saying: "I am very pleased with it though I never thought of the possible scandal. . . ." Ghelderode confesses an affinity to Edgar Allan Poe, and this play clinches the relationship, although the supernatural implications threaten to make Poe's fantasies look like an evening with Lawrence Welk.

Pantagleize is the other full-length play in the volume which deserves serious consideration. It is neither Biblical nor medieval but occurs "on the morrow of one war and the eve of another" and is reminiscent, in its style, of the German Marxist playwright, Bertolt Brecht. *Pantagleize* is an innocent who precipitates a revolution—the sap who is the occasion for world-shaking events. But it is a much more calculated work than *Barabbas*. Ghelderode speaks of his leading character as "an archetype, a Poet," and there is an air of strain about parts of it as though the vehicle of the comedy is overloaded with a freight of symbolism it cannot properly carry. But even here, when the full effect is not obtained, there is an energy of invention which pleases and satisfies.

Lord Halewyn is a more conventional Gothic horror tale although it has a wonderfully typical Ghelderode stage direction: "The season is Winter, the time the Middle Ages." *The Blind Men*, *The Women at the Tomb*, and *Three Actors and Their Drama* are all short pieces: the first, a kind of moral fable inspired by a painting by Brueghel; the second, a series of character sketches intended by Ghelderode for a puppet theater (what squint-eyed artisan could carve Ghelderode puppets? the woodcutters from Lorca's *Blood Wedding*?); and the third, a Flemish echo of Pirandello sounding an engagement between illusion and reality—a theme which seems strangely pale beside the realities of *Barabbas*.

A society called "The American Friends of Michel de Ghelderode" has been formed at Columbia University to put the uses of publicity in the service of the Belgian playwright. The president, Samuel Draper, has objected to the Hauger translations on the grounds that they are British and literary, but this seems to me not to apply to the *Barabbas* except for an unimportant phrase here and there. Ghelderode's dialogue has the dramatic virtue of springing from the character and the situation and this always renders the translator's task easier since he is required only to be faithful; the beauty of the work inheres not in the words but in the scene itself and the complex of elements—action, character, speech, mood—which constitute it. Any attempt to capture the verbal beauty of the original French would require a translator as highly talented as Ghelderode, and the possibilities of this are remote. Hauger's versions are clear and vivid and retain

the dramatic progression of the scenes, and this is really all a good playwright can ask for—and much more than some of the past masters of the drama have ever received.

BECKET reviewed by Eleanor F. Culhane and reprinted from *THE CRITIC*, February-March, 1961.

Jean Anouilh's *Becket* is brought to brilliant life by Laurence Olivier, but the superb performance of the theater's outstanding virtuoso cannot wholly salvage a play which suffers not so much from faulty construction as from a faulty conception of the major figures. Anouilh makes liberal use of the dramatist's prerogative to tamper with historical facts, but instead of fortifying his drama by doing so, he lessens conflict and reduces interest in his central theme. It is one thing to transform Becket, for purposes of the stage, from the King's older adviser into the boisterous companion of his youthful folly; it is another thing to reduce the magnificent conflict between the historically separating church and state, represented by an equally matched King and Archbishop, to the terms of an unmistakably homosexual attraction on the part of the King, which, unreturned by Becket, comes to evil fruition in the famous murder on the altar steps of Canterbury.

Not only has the traditionally strong role of King been diminished in stature, but it has apparently been tailored to fit the particular talents of Anthony Quinn who shouts and slams his way around the stage like a crude and noisy cowboy. The uneasy audience is thus treated to the dubious pleasure of seeing high tragedy and low comedy played at the same time. Olivier's portrayal of Becket actually enhances the role as it is written, and it is well worth the price of admission to see him, in some sort of theatrical miracle, project the saint across the footlights. He seems incapable of making a false motion, and in one of several exquisitely staged scenes in which he appears without the King, he converses with a young monk while vesting in his episcopal robes, and makes each measured gesture a joy to the eye. The characters who gravitate toward Becket in this production, such as Gwendolyn, his accomplished and pitiable mistress, and the King of France who appears briefly but powerfully, provide dramatic entertainment of the highest caliber. But the King, the Queen, the Queen Mother, and the repellent young princes meanwhile busily enact their own soap opera, exchanging occasional words but never any thoughts with the rest of the cast.

The schizophrenic quality of this play is not confined merely to the difference in the protagonists, but extends to the whole dramatic construction. It is flagrantly demonstrated in one scene in which a pope and a cardinal discuss the political maneuvering among the King, Becket, and the King of France, which has become hopelessly entangled and from which the pope hopes to obtain the ripest political plums for the papacy. This scene should have provided some wonderfully intellectual comic relief before the inescapable tragedy of the murder, but it is unaccountably played in Italian push-cart dialect which is difficult to understand, hard to believe and unnecessarily offensive in a play in which most other characters, including the equally foreign King of France, speak the most elegant Oxford prose.

Anyone acquainted however briefly with the story of the real Thomas who, when forced for worldly reasons to assume the robes of God's office, rose magnificently to the occasion and also assumed God's responsibilities, will I think, be profoundly disappointed in this most recent telling of the tale. Lacking the spiritual and intellectual fire of *Murder in the Cathedral*, it offers as substitute bright costumes, Olivier's performance which it does not deserve, and one engaging horseback scene in which the dummy horses prove more interesting to the audience than the men who ride them.

ART IMITATES NATURE FUNCTION OF THE ARTS:

By GILBERT ROXBURGH, O. P.

That man on the floor waving his elbows up and down like flippers and threshing about on the carpet, gasping and blowing for the entertainment of his friends, personifies in a clear and unequivocal image the function of the fine arts in imitating nature.

At the moment, our friend on the floor is seriously engrossed—doubtless because his wife, who brought him along, seriously engrossed him—in that perennial parlor game, "charades." And though his companions do not know it, what he is trying to convey to them by an odd assortment of gestures, postures, and muffled grunts is the title of the play, *The Voice of the Turtle*.

No matter what anyone says, this is not an easy phrase to represent visually. Therefore, in those critical moments between the assignment and the performance, the canny charade player must stop to muster his forces to be sure he knows exactly what "voice" is and exactly what "turtle" is—that is, what element in "voiceness" and in "turtleness" sets these realities apart from all other things, and what features can be used to call these notions to the minds of the auditors?

For the moment of truth will arrive—his knees are already trembling—and there will be that awful instant when he will have to sink to the carpet to begin his scene. Has he approached his role shrewdly? Has he in his pantomime hit upon the characteristic pose or expression to call forth recognition in every spectator: "Ah—of course! He is a turtle! Look, Florence—Fred is a turtle!"

Aristotle, who had a phrase for everything, had a phrase for this too: *art imitates nature*. For the fact of the matter is that Fred has—in these dying moments of a company party—created a work of art.

Art imitates nature. The aphorism is a handsome saying, and well turned. But there is an almost inborn inclination in all of us to react violently, and those who were friends go off not speaking. To cry out: "But the artist, be he charadist, novelist, painter, or composer, *doesn't* imitate nature *at all!*" is to ignore the fact that Fred, playing charades, really did create an "imitation" of a turtle. He really did tell us—and, for his purposes, far better than the natural historian would have done—precisely what a turtle is. And Fred proceeded in his creative work in quite the same way as Bernini did when he showed us in sculptured stone, the bust of Buonarelli, far more about Buonarelli than would the skull measurements or the most intimate personal acquaintance with Buonarelli.

Reverend Gilbert Roxburgh, O.P., of St. Rose Priory, Dubuque, Iowa, is a professor of theology and associate editor of Cross and Crown, a Dominican publication. His article "Mind, Emotion, and Wagner's Dream," appeared recently in Drama Critique.

When we say that Fred is *imitating* a turtle, or that Bernini is *imitating* the face and head of Buonarelli, what we mean is that the artist is trying to construct in the matter of his art some kind of image or resemblance to an existing original. Fred is trying to create a likeness of a "real-life" turtle by means of his own histrionics.

But what is most important for us to understand is that the resemblance between Fred and an actual turtle is not merely lifelike. Fred's avowed purpose as a charadist is to create a *significant* or *meaningful* or *intelligible* resemblance, which aims at depicting what is essential or expressive of the essential in a turtle, by-passing all the contingent circumstances and conditions in the life of a turtle. And since, presumably, an Atlantic turtle will have a different kind of personality from a Pacific one, Fred may want to indicate this by a different selectivity of those factors reflecting this difference in temperament.

The author, the architect, the actor, in their own esthetic encounter with reality, likewise are intent upon constructing in words, in stone or wood or steel, in mime, an imitation of reality far removed from a mere copy of reality in all its minute detail. The artist is interested in a special kind of resemblance, one which, in a sense, by-passes reality to capture the inner reality of this thing before him, to remove from the world of conflicting forces and events the essence of this object—a turtle or a face—by depicting certain characteristic features or movements or expressions in some sensory way. Fred, the artist working in tempera, the virtuoso at the harpsichord strive for a resemblance, but for a *significant resemblance*, in which each property or peculiarity portrayed has *meaning* in the manifestation of the subject. Thus, Fred selects certain proper actions or responses or postures of a turtle to recall by association the essence from which, in "real life," these proper actions or responses or postures proceed.

We should recognize, then, that there is a resemblance, far removed from the significant resemblance we have been talking about, which looks *too much* like the physical reality of which it is a copy. This portrait looks "exactly" like Marjorie—and therefore is poor art. Oh, yes—there is a likeness of Marjorie there, but it is the Marjorie we see all the time, the surface Marjorie. This painting tells us from the outside what Marjorie looks like, but in no way reveals to us what Marjorie as a personality *is*. The portrait which does nothing but "copy" Marjorie includes too much; it fails to distinguish between what is contingently happening to Marjorie here and now, and those thoughts, feelings, and acts which flow from Marjorie as Marjorie. The product of chance, of accident, of contingency, so paramount in human life, must be left behind in the work of art, because it does not illumine for us the character or personality of the subject in meaningful terms. The artist must pass by reality to seek out the underlying reality in his subject.

Those who regularly passed St. Francis of Assisi on the street probably never gave him a second glance. His face was like a thousand other faces. But in Zurbaran's painting of St. Francis, what is ordinarily and commonly found in human countenances is left behind, and the artist captures only what is truly enlightening about St. Francis. The figure—his head covered by his hood, his hands in his sleeves—has cast his eyes to heaven in a movingly ecstatic gaze expressive of the man's intimate inner life.

The creativity of art cannot be separated from the life of emotion. But the moment of inspiration presupposes a moment of understanding. The artist must first have comprehended his subject. He must have seen through the mass of phenomena which surround it in physical reality, piercing through to the essence and those characteristic modes of thought, emotion, external act, which flow immediately from this interior personality.

In discriminating between the proper and the purely adventitious, he must be selective, a conception of the artist's role in imitating nature which is the very antithesis of the imitation-copy.

The artist is not really concerned with "things as they are" in the confused world of chaotic cross-purposes, but with things "as they ought to be"—"ought" in the ontological, not the moral sense. This merely means that the artist depicts faces, personalities, perspectives, emotions as they would be in real life, if existence in the real world permitted things to be fully themselves.

Reality, after all, has a penchant for getting in its own way. Few men can escape the distractions of life sufficiently to think and to will in the heroic degree of the character in the drama. Human beings in life are frustrated in realizing their complete human potentialities by the demands of making a living and coping with the minutiae of existence. But in the drama, these contingencies have no place; they are not part of the *significant resemblance*. The characters of the play must be released from the more trivial exigencies of life to be able to rise to the heights of human grandeur or villainy.

Look at the dialogue of a play and see how different it is from conversation in real life. Speech between two persons in reality is wandering and diffuse. The speakers start up first this avenue and then suddenly turn down another; they retreat and then retreat again. They say many things which are untrue or only half-true, and which they may even know to be such. There is no unity in their conglomeration of ideas, perhaps no main point at all. Problems are seldom solved, and agreement is seldom reached. In fact, serious topics are rarely treated in the first place. Words are spent too freely. Sentences once begun may never be completed. Thoughts are poorly stated, and it is infrequent that the meaning could be culled from what is said without reference to the context. There are interruptions. One fights for words.

Dialogue in a play, while it may attempt to retain the flavor of real-life conversation, organizes its content for meaning, for emotional impact, for dramatic effect. There is progression in the thought. People, being fully themselves, speak in characteristic ways, revealing their sentiments and mental processes. Nothing is wasted. Everything functions to further the action of the drama.

When a playwright "imitates" a dramatic character, he does not make an exact copy of some figure in external reality. A mere duplication of this kind does not clarify reality or give new insights into it; it further confuses the same old world we knew, the same maze of unrelated, unsorted materials, the essential and the non-essential, reproduced without discrimination.

For art is meant, in imitating life, to give perspective and vision to life, to communicate the purposefulness of the world and human existence, obscured in one's preoccupation with life's here-and-nowness.

But an imitation of life which is nothing more than a carbon copy does not enlighten us at all, since man in the midst of the world knows the details, the dotted "i's" and crossed "t's" as well or better than the poet and the painter. What is lacking is a comprehension of meaning, intelligibility. We are confused by the arbitrariness of men and institutions, the weakness of ideals, the strength of evil. We need to be reassured by a vision of reality that we and our ideals still have significance. We need to be shown again what things are, and not merely what things seem.

The world is, in fact, untrue to itself. Reality struggles to make itself heard, but cannot. It fails to fulfill its own promise of actuality and perfection. And so the artist amplifies reality's voice to make it heard. He completes nature's expression of itself, and wrests from nature what nature is so often powerless to reveal of itself—the ideal form or essence or nature which lies beneath the appearances of things.

The most popular visual feature in newspapers and magazines, polls tell us, are photographs of children and animals. Clearly, we have in popular taste a touch of the anthropomorphic, for children and animals can tell us so much more about human nature than adult human beings can. There is in the emotional or mental responses of both children and animals—particularly, dogs—an integrity or simplicity of expression uncomplicated by social inhibition of any sort. What they think inwardly is manifested outwardly. Gesture, facial expression, body movement, things spoken, directly communicate the inner activity; every action or deed is somehow typical and true to form, for here at least human nature says what it fully means to say.

The caricaturist—whose work can be seen in political cartoons or, for instance, the front page of the theater section of the *New York Times*—draws a few simple lines. But like the actions of children, extraordinarily simple, each of them counts, each is significant. The characteristic has been uncovered and made intelligible.

And this is what the designer or the actor or the novelist looks for in creating his own imitation of life, gathering in from the original any revealing attribute or quality for a significant resemblance. A choreographer may be moved by a posture reflective of a certain emotional state peculiar to a certain type of temperament.

To interpret *art imitates nature* as a mere duplication or copy of reality manifests a radical misapprehension of the function of the arts. Imitation considered as a mere copy completely fails to depict things as they are. Besides which, the imitation-copy is an impossibility. No art form can master its subject thoroughly enough to accurately reproduce it in every detail. The artist in his initial observation of a face or landscape or turtle is foiled if this is his purpose. Even the external senses "abstract" from their object; the three-dimensional reality is seen by a two-dimensional surface of the eye. A two-dimensional canvas must try to

capture the three-dimensional reality by the use of perspective and other "unreal" conventions which absolutely preclude a carbon copy image of reality. Sculpture, in striving to depict struggle or physical motion occurring in space and time, must face the fact that it is doing so in an essentially static medium; this art too must employ "unreal" devices to portray the original of its imitation.

But ultimately the carbon copy explanation of artistic imitation fails to satisfy us because the imitation-copy neither perceives nor communicates significance. It is too easily satisfied with the recapitulation of the already unintelligible confusion of essential and non-essential which is apparent in reality.

This is the danger of extremely "realistic" art—it tells too much. It becomes a report instead of an imitation. It is a case history instead of a vision of truth. That essential note of art—imitation, significant resemblance—is missing.

This is the excellence of Elizabeth Bowen as a writer. The literary imitation is intimately related to human nature as we recognize it to be. But the monotonicities and trivialities are gone. Every stroke of the pen lends dynamism, excitement, significance to this picture of the essential human nature fully rounded and fully capsuled. In real life, men light their cigarettes in peace and war, in calm and conflict, and no one finds that stunning. But in a novel, in a drama, in a story, this would be pure waste unless it expressed some inner turn of thought or feeling—the rejection of a way of life formerly led, the acceptance of failure, the resolve to begin anew.

Art imitates nature. When we use here the word "nature," we must not immediately turn our mind to the birds and the bees, forests and oceans. "Nature" is not the pastoral nature of "Mother Nature," but the nature of "human nature." In this context, nature is the principle of something's activity and passivity, action and response. Nature is essence as operative—operative in characteristic ways. The nature of oxygen tells us what oxygen is, and this accounts also for what oxygen does or permits something to be done to it. "Why is Uncle Bertrand so obstinate?" "That's human nature, or at least that's Uncle Bertrand's human nature."

Human nature is such a rich and imitable entity. It takes such various forms, shaped by race and culture, shaped by personal experience, education, self-discipline or self-indulgence. Art, in composing an image of human nature, ferrets out not only what is proper and characteristic of human nature in general but also what is proper and characteristic of all humanity's different types and temperaments.

Human nature, especially as encountered in the individual instance of human nature, delights us when we observe it acting true to form. This is what lies behind our affection for another's eccentricities and faults. Anything which flows from this particular essence, from this human being, as its proper principle is apt matter for art to represent in its own medium. Are these not the things art leaps to capture in its moment of inspiration—to somehow embody those enlightening glimpses into the essence of things, seeing those essences or natures as the proper causes of this typical activity?

This is the meaning of *art imitates nature*: art reveals the essences of things; art unveils nature by portraying what is unique and proper to each nature. And

let us face the implications. Painting, music, literature are not interested primarily in the nature of a rock or crystal, of the sun or of the giraffe. The focus of all art is human nature in all its manifold developments. Each art seeks in its own way to penetrate the meaning of man and man's existence by imaging him in all his variations of temperament, character, and personality—as manifested in action, whether the internal action of mental life or the external action of deed.

"By their fruits you shall know them," Sacred Scripture tells us. *Operatio sequitur esse*, the scholastics tell us, meaning that the way a thing acts follows upon the kind of essence or nature it is. Thus in art we work backward from the external manifestations of feeling or intelligence to the inner source from which these manifestations spring, as we judge the nature of man from the frank and candid reactions of children—as we reason: "Yes, I should have guessed it sooner; Fred is a turtle, Florence!" from the assumed manner of a turtle.

There is a famous drawing called "The Bostonian's Map of the United States." The eastern third of North America is labeled "Boston and Environs." Neighboring New York City occupies a somewhat smaller area extending down to where Florida used to be. There is a thin, insignificant strip of territory extending down the middle, sparsely marked, labeled "The Midwest." Beverly Hills, Hollywood, and "the rest of the western coast" fill out the remainder of the continent, dotted by the spas most frequented by Boston sophisticates.

Topographically, this map is useless. It tells you nothing about the land. But it tells you a great deal about the man who ostensibly drew this map. The United States is seen, not as it is, but as a certain kind of person might see it through the prism of his own class, education, interests, and occupation.

This drawing is an imitation of nature, not in the sense that it presents an accurate copy of the nation it purports to represent, but in the sense that it reveals so much about the personality—the individual human nature—of the supposed topographer. He has mirrored himself for us by setting down the effects of his own intellect. This is how he sees the world he lives in, and from it you could draw his picture. You could describe the cut of clothes he wears, the books he reads, the music he likes. His wife no doubt came from *this* stock, would play well, but not too well, *this* sport. *Here* is where he lives, in *this* style house, with *this* style of furniture. Since of course *this* is what he does for a living, *this* is the address of his office.

And it seems impossible not to believe that he has some very close friends sitting in high places, who helped to formulate a United Nations request, reported a few months ago by *Time* magazine, that the Jews and Arabs sit down and talk things over "like Christian gentlemen." A passing remark merely? But here, too, art imitates nature. Is this not a snapshot of a certain identifiable attitude of mind belonging to a man securely appraising the world situation in terms of his own frame of reference, expecting his position to be obvious to all?

Let us listen to Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande* or to the music dramas of Richard Wagner. Without denying the vast differences between these two forms, let us neither deny that both are natural expressions of the nineteenth century's

vision of man and his meaning. The music is readily identifiable in each case because the very techniques used are so bound up with the view of life envisioned by the respective composers. In case we were ever in a state of doubt on this question, we have Wagner's extensive writings to reassure us. Man is pictured as a creature in the grip of his own emotions. He is impelled to this or that destiny—invariably his doom—by the force of passion, against which cannot stand the power of reason. There is in the Wagnerian music drama constant turbulence in the emotional order, not only in the text of the drama, but in the very music, with its fear of the final cadence, as though to show us a man moving on—moving on to search for some place of peace and freedom from passion.

Ruth Krause, gathering together the definitions of kindergarten and nursery school children for her book, *A Hole is to Dig*, has uncovered a child's view of the world, man, and the child's own place in it. Asked to define a hand, one child replied, creating his own authentic, if perhaps ephemeral, work of art, that "a hand is to hold up when you want your turn." And if we got down on our hands and knees and gazed upon the universe through the eyes of a child, would we not apprehend the meaning of a human hand in this way? This is a reflection of the inner life of a child, his place in society. He is a subordinate, a figure always waiting for his turn, and to get it he must, every time, stick up his hand.

What the art of our time thinks man is, is not easy to say. One would have to wander for a long time through the maze of modern culture, studying "beat" poetry, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Marianne Moore, the modern novel, the television western hero, Samuel Barber, the girdle and deodorant ads. A generation behind us found the romantic vision of life of Maxwell Anderson's *Mary of Scotland* meaningful, or Greta Garbo's performance of *Camille*. The *Sturm und Drang* culture of a century ago saw man as ruled by what they considered in those days to be his supreme faculty—his passions. Painting and drama in seventeenth-century France idealized human nature in the person of the courtier of leisure, exemplified in the pictures of Watteau, who, though he flourished somewhat later, outlined human nature in pastoral gardens engaged in idyllic flirtations from a slow-moving swing, or promenading about noble country houses.

A vision of man? Here we have one, the natural offspring of each century—man in action.

"Human action" is a phrase that likewise must be referred to its Aristotelian context. It is perhaps already clear that "action" is not to be construed as referring solely to overt deeds. Our friend Aristotle describes in the *Poetics* three kinds of human action to be imitated by the creative artist—*ethe*, *pathe*, *praxis*.

Ethe comprises the moral qualities of a man, his virtues and vices, those permanent and abiding habits by which his conduct is made good or bad. This is what we are accustomed to call a man's "character." *Pathe* embraces man's more passing states of feeling, his life of the passions or emotions. *Praxis* comes closest to what we ordinarily mean by "action"—the outward movement or gesture, but still essentially flowing from that interior source of human action, human nature as modified in each individual personality by differences of experience, temperament, and character.

This sharpened concept of human action includes everything and anything expressing the inner life of the mind, anything which reveals human personality as rational, anything which flows from or is received by man's specifically human operations of intellect and will, which in their turn govern the emotions and appetites—all determined by this man's unique version of human nature. Each of the arts in its own way depicts man in action—feelings, thoughts, deeds, events, situations, overt actions and reactions, mental processes, motivations—precisely as properties or signs of the human essence within.

There is a sense, of course, in which the artist draws upon the entire sensory universe for his material of imitation. A painter traces a landscape. A designer fashions a gown. An architect conceives a building.

But here too we have instances, though remote, of human action being imitated. The landscape has meaning in terms of human values because it is the background for human life, the place where man dwells, the land he cultivates or reserves for recreation, the environment which conditions his thought and provides for him the material for his imaginings. Costume, too, mirrors a man's state in life, both professionally and economically, indicates his degree and station, his period in history, his conservative or immodest taste. Architecture shows us man planning his home or place of work.

The literary arts function in a special way to communicate thought, although by meter, inflection, metaphor, periodic sentences, emotional responses are also invoked.

Music also imitates human action—understanding human action to include all of man's emotional activity. In the melodic movement of the human voice in song, or in orchestral music, which is its substitute, we encounter broad sweeps of feeling impossible in mere spoken speech. Because of its powerful emotional impact, Aristotle refers to music as the most imitative of the arts; for him, it directly imitates character and emotion; "In rhythm and melody, we have the most realistic imitation of anger and mildness, as well as of courage, temperance, and all their opposites" (*Politics* vii. 5. 1340a 18). For music conveys, not only states of feeling, but also virtue and vice according as the emotions aroused by the music are afterwards calmed or not, or are not aroused beyond the limits of rational recreation.

Painting depicts human nature in line and color, while sculpture imitates in the three-dimensional figure. These arts suppose a delicate correspondence between the body and the soul, so that the former responds in close accord with the latter—that the blush, the tightening of muscles in this bodily member or that, the sudden, unrestrained motion of the arm—all proceed from some inner state of mind or feeling, as do the placid and tranquil countenance, the relaxed head, the peaceful eye.

Photography can also share in the mimetic nature of art; the nature of the subject can be highlighted and interpreted by composition of the picture with symbolically antagonistic or complementary objects, by use of lighting, by changes in focus.

The motion picture adds to the photograph extension in time. Like the photographer, the director or film editor must choose shots to convey meaning, combining sequences of such shots in a way by which one can comment upon the other—the montage. The art of film, of course, utilizes many of the conventions and techniques of the drama.

Architecture remotely disposes man for his life of thought, feeling, activity, or follows upon certain typical casts of thought or feeling. In the buildings where man lives and works, architecture attempts to introduce proper amounts of light and air for human activity. Building design also helps to establish mood and atmosphere for different kinds of human living, and so we refer to this or that building as “just the right place to study” or “exactly the sort of room for such an important branch of government” or “it really has the atmosphere of prayer.” We learn a great deal about a people from their houses. The availability of various rooms in the light of their purposes reveals a philosophy of life, a temperance or intemperance, a sense of discipline or indiscipline.

This is the principle of all the arts: *art imitates nature*. By this we mean that art eliminates the transient and non-essential features of reality to evoke the typical, the permanent, the essential elements in human life and conduct. This is the ideal which nature strives to attain, but rarely can bring to realization. Art is a kind of making over of reality according to reality's true basic ideal. The artist knows reality better than reality knows itself. He sees at what each essence is aiming. He notes how each nature stammers and stutters in expressing itself in the real world, and then takes down nature's testimony about itself and puts this testimony into coherent form: What is this object saying? asks the artist. And then he proceeds to reveal to us the inmost essence of this thing by selecting the attributes most truly significant in terms of that essence, separating them from those qualities which have no such meaning.

Only man—and man the artist—can perceive in the confusion of experience the natures of things and those qualities which properly represent them. Only man can in some other matter, alien to the original subject in reality, create an imitation in sounds, words, motions, oils, tempera, stone, wood, glass.

It all started with Fred there on the floor playing charades, all the time wishing he was home watching television. But artists they all are—Fred, the novelist, the actor, the story-teller, the book designer, the photographer. To see meaning among the things of the world and be able to translate that meaning into a significant resemblance is a sublime human endowment, imposing obligation and responsibility upon the artist, but also bestowing light and understanding upon the lives of countless other men.

SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY YEA-AND-NAY

By HUGH DICKINSON

Scholarship and criticism, once less than kind to Shakespeare's youthful effort, the trilogy of *Henry VI*, have finally come to regard it as a little more than kin. With his authorship now accepted for most of it, if not all, the critical stature of the dramatic chronicle has also risen beyond its former dismal level as a subject for graduate study only. Best of all, it was the theater that in the last decade rescued *Henry VI* from the limbo of plays unplayable and unproduced. It did so in England when the Birmingham Repertory Company vindicated the long-held conviction of its producer, Sir Barry Jackson, that the plays were both actable and stageworthy.

Sir Barry's revivals of 1951, directed by Douglas Seale, later repeated their success at the Old Vic in London. Shakespearean audiences thus owe these men a debt of gratitude, and a double debt to Seale who, in London and later at Stratford in Canada, also rescued from a neglect nearly as great that other early effort at a history play, Shakespeare's *King John*. Indeed, Seale triumphed to such an extent that for many at Stratford in 1960 *King John* was the principal success of the festival. It may be hoped that *Henry VI*, if interpreted and staged as excitingly, would come to enjoy similar popularity in the New World.

The proven stageworthiness of the trilogy invites further interest and appreciation, if it is realized that history, in the person of the boy-king whose pathetic incapacity for rule precipitated the Wars of the Roses, presented Shakespeare a most difficult problem of dramaturgy. King Henry is necessarily the pivot of the action in all three plays. A king both strong and good was, in Shakespeare's view, indispensable to the peace of an ordered society; and Henry was the symbol of that kingship, the objectified embodiment of all the dynastic ambitions and struggles of the Houses of York and Lancaster, their enemies, and allies. But the historical Henry was not only too young for the burdens of office, he was at first weak-minded and later, if only at times, actually insane. As such, he was most unpromising material for drama. It would be hard to see how the playwright could have eliminated him, weak as he was, except at the risk of weakening the point of the plays. Yet a weak-minded man, let alone an insane one, could not figure prominently and effectively in the long and complicated action. How was the playwright to meet this unavoidable problem?

In order to place the events of three generations on the stage, Shakespeare did not hesitate to distort freely the historical facts as he found them in the chronicles: he telescoped, transposed, and invented incidents; he altered ages, characters, and motives. He had no nice regard for accuracy in historical particulars; and so he was free to change the character of the king, if he could find a solution. It was his awareness of dramaturgic demands that must account for the interesting stage character of King Henry VI which he eventually created.

Mr. Dickinson is an associate professor in the Department of Speech and Drama, Loyola University, Chicago, and a frequent contributor to Drama Critique.

Why not show Henry mad, and let it go at that? Insanity is touchy stuff for a playwright to handle. Shakespeare would later treat it in Ophelia, more interestingly still in King Lear, and most interestingly of all in Hamlet, in whom he made it yield incredible dramatic force. But the risks are high, the drawbacks considerable. In the case of Henry, Shakespeare avoided them entirely. Ophelia, mad, is a pathetic figure. We feel keenly the pathos of her plight, yet we can follow the workings of her mind but intermittently, and then only in relation to what she was and what has gone before. With her mind gone, her actions cease to have much meaning, except as they affect others. Her character is fixed, incapable of development. Dramatically speaking, one might almost say that Ophelia is dead before she takes her own life. King Lear is something else again, for we tremble with him as he fears and fights against his oncoming madness; and, when it comes, we know it is a necessary part of his agony and redemption. But, so long as it lasts, he is less active than acted upon; and it is necessarily brief.

History reveals Henry as ineffectual because irrational, and therefore irresponsible. Without mind, there can be little or no significant dramatic action, because there can be no rational choice; and drama requires choice, for it centers in the will. The will creates conflict, either by its presence or its absence, especially in the case of a king upon whom, by reason of the gravity of his office, the whole health of the state depends. Here lay the key to the playwright's solution, the workable substitute for royal madness. It offered Shakespeare a way to retrieve the historical King Henry and rehabilitate him for the stage. It was a conception as brilliant as the way in which he showed the white and red roses becoming the symbols of York and Lancaster. The solution was to make King Henry, not weak-minded, but weak-willed. Dramatically, this made all the difference in the world.

If subtlety consists in doing complicated things simply, this solution was extremely subtle. It did more than give the king a dramatically viable character, it placed him in sharp contrast to those around him and worked his fatal flaw of character into the fabric of the action. This centered the action on the great weakness of kingships: the monarch incapable, for whatever reasons, of reigning as events require. As the keystone of society, a king had to have for successful rule the qualities of power and cunning, but also of unselfishness. Henry utterly lacked power and cunning; he also lacked, as I hope to show, the third kingly virtue of self-sacrifice. Could there be an unconscious echo of the historical Henry's madness in the contemptuous question of his wife, Queen Margaret: "What is the body when the head is off?" In any case, this reference to the king's inadequacy has direct bearing on the created Henry and a deeper application: it sums up one of the themes of the plays. It would have been easy, but obvious, to deprive Henry of the two kingly virtues, but leave him self-sacrifice. But Shakespeare conceived the character more complexly, and he found most credible ways of motivating and rationalizing the incapacity of his weak-willed king. He was able to do so, even while using the king to utter those ideals of justice and order by which all the characters are measured and judged—King Henry too, no less than the others.

Since King Henry acts chiefly by refusing to act, or by acting inadequately; and since so much violent and bloody conflict swirls about his figure, we may tend to overlook the fact that his character is gradually, if unobtrusively, revealing itself throughout the three plays. This revelation is, in part, an ironic study of in-

consistency and self-deception. The flaw of inconsistency arises from, and contributes to, the chain of ironic reversals which make up the complex action of the plays. And so it receives its full significance only in relation to it. As for the self-deception, it is so complete that for a time we, too, are taken in by it.

Before we are introduced to King Henry, we see two acts of the "jarring discord of nobility" in the English campaigns in France, and with them the beginning of York's ambitions. When the king does appear, the main elements of his character are present, but veiled from us. His youth, his inexperience, the fact that even the practiced and honorable Gloucester, his protector, can succeed no better—all these circumstances keep us from sensing clearly what this king is or may become. But later the scene proves to have been very characteristic: lords jarring as if Henry were not present, Henry hoping to prevail through prayers and assuming that reproofs unsupported by might will bring men to their senses, so that he may unite them in love and amity. Here, along with his piety, are the first of the weeping king's many references to his sighs and tears, the mere sight of which he seems to think will suffice to melt the relentless disputants. Here, too, is his ignorance of the realities of motive and situation, or his blindness to them; yet, coupled with this, there is a grasp of the moral lessons of history that ironically proves prophetic: "Civil dissension is a viperous worm, That gnaws the bowels of the commonwealth." The others know these truisms, but do not act as if they believed them; Henry believes them intensely, but cannot act upon them.

When he restores Richard of York to his blood and to his whole inheritance, it is like the close of the first act in the five-act drama of Henry's life. The issues are drawn. Henry has set going the machinery of his own doom, he has directed our expectations to the impending tragedy, and has, by statement and contrast, established the ideal of kingly love and lordly obedience against which we measure the true state of affairs.

Thereafter, Henry does a number of right things that help for a time to hide the full extent of his incapacity to rule. He gives Talbot deserved preferment, peremptorily banishes Fastolfe for cowardice in the field; consents, despite his unreadiness for marriage, to the politically wise alliance with the House of Armignac; and defends Gloucester against the imputation of witchcraft. But some of these acts are offset by impulsive inconsistencies that are a growing sign of his weak will. He is quickly inflamed by Suffolk's suit for Margaret of Anjou, so that he reneges on his previous agreement, disregards Armignac's wealth and power, and offers his hand to Margaret without consulting Gloucester. Driven by his own desires, he quite forgets his previous words: "I shall be well content with any choice Tends to God's glory and my country's weal." In his excitement at Margaret's arrival, he ignores the serious loss of Anjou and Maine that his marriage has cost the English crown, presents Suffolk a dukedom for causing the loss, and takes an irresponsible position in regard to the regency of France: "For my part, noble lords, I care not which: Or Somerset or York, all's one to me." The same indifference, amounting to dereliction of duty, again shows itself when Somerset, as regent, announces the loss of all royal holdings in France: "Cold news, Lord Somerset: but God's will be done!" And this, too, after having summarily dismissed his "no less belov'd" Gloucester: "Henry will to himself Protector be; and God shall be my hope, My stay, my guide . . ." Then he puts the fate of Gloucester,

who of all men he should defend and try to save, squarely into his "vowed enemies'" mighty hands: "My lords, what to your wisdoms seemeth best Do or undo, as if ourself were here." Henry does not recognize this for what it is: the betrayal of his friend; and his actual, if not his formal, abdication.

His blindness has another aspect: he cannot learn wisdom from past experience, nor change his view of the world by which he interprets men and events. He assumes that men have only to be reminded of the law to submit to it, despite the abundant evidence of his own experience. He begs God to forgive him, if Gloucester was murdered; but his pious pleas to heaven are by now so habitual that he seems to have no true grasp of his own share of guilt in Gloucester's death. Even after Jack Cade's rebellion and further strife among the nobles, he can still think no man will go against his oath and true allegiance—not even York.

All this is because he thinks—as later Shakespeare will have Richard II think—that some dread majesty inheres in kingship itself: "Frowns, words and threats Shall be the war that Henry means to use." He cannot see that the majesty of kingship, if worn by a weak ruler, becomes a spur and not a check to emulous men. He is the reverse of Richard III, who deliberately seems a saint when most he plays the devil; so unlike the bloodthirsty, rapacious nobles that surround him, that he can never quite believe they will do such wicked deeds—until they have done them. He fancies somehow that a sense of decorum, a regard for law and justice, and a reverence for the crown will deter them. So he copes with them, not by deeds, but by gestures—that is, by ineffectual threats.

King Henry dreads war above all, but to retain the throne he inherited he will "unpeople this my realm";—only to temporize at the first sight of York's troops: "Let me for this life-time reign as king." Here we see another inconsistency cutting deep; for his longing to be rid of the burden of kingship—indeed, his weariness of life itself—has begun to grow in him, yet he clings like a limpet to his unique eminence. The split in his will is glaring, but completely plausible: all his breeding, his reverence for the throne, his deluded faith in its mystical power, no less than his enjoyment of its ease and worship, keep him from yielding it up, as he thinks, outright. His thorough-going egotism is now more apparent than it has been earlier; for he thinks not of his queen's state or his son's inheritance, but only of himself. He does not, or cannot, answer the queen's furious charge: "Thou prefer'st thy life before thine honour . . ."

With egotism goes self-justification. At the sight of York's head upon a pike, he again cries out for forgiveness—and in the same breath justifies himself: "Withhold revenge, dear God! 'tis not my fault, Nor wittingly have I infring'd my vow." When Clifford rebukes him for "too much lenity and harmful pity," telling him to think instead of his son Edward, Prince of Wales, and to "steel thy heart To hold thine own and leave thine own with him," Henry's reply is both unanswerable and inadequate: "But Clifford, tell me, didst thou never hear/ That things ill got had ever bad success? . . ./ I would leave my son my virtuous deeds behind;/ And would my father had left me no more!"

The sincerity of Henry's piety is patent; yet, at the same time, one cannot help but sense the deep, unconscious self-deception that mars it. In the midst

of a battle, when he should be fighting, he can sit upon a molehill and say: "To whom God will, there be the victory!" He can also thank Warwick for his deliverance from the Tower with the words: "He (God) was the author, thou the instrument." But that he himself, as king, might more effectively be God's instrument by accepting the full responsibility of kingship and acting upon it, utterly escapes him. His weak will, coupled with a delicate conscience, has found in religion its invincible armor—and its justification for doing nothing. It is the greedy and ambitious plotters in his court—Margaret, Richard, and the others—who tell him to his face the truth about his character, but he is as incapable of grasping it as he would be of acting upon it.

The full extent of his weakness becomes apparent only when, in the third play, we can contrast our first picture of him and the stout courage and readiness his own son shows. And by now his persistent faith in his own kingship has become so ironical that it is pathetically laughable: he is never weaker than when he says: "Methinks the power that Edward hath in field Should not be able to encounter mine." Yet when the moment of his death approaches, he is not despicable. Anticipating it, he can lament his son's sad end, and watch himself, as it were, meeting death: "What scene of death hath Roscius now to act?" Here, as in his irresponsibility and his view of kingship, he is an interesting anticipation of Shakespeare's creation of Richard II: he is Henry Yea-and-Nay.

The playwright, by substituting weakness of will for Henry's insanity, has made it the central irony of the plays. It is not only that the person with the clearest view of kingship and of the country's good is the one man least capable of achieving them. Rather, it is that the man who expresses the moral order governing events is blindest about the part his own nature plays in them, because he is subtly self-deceived. Shakespeare reserves for him a final irony, which relates to his prophetic powers. The scene in which he prophesies that young Henry, Earl of Richmond, "will prove our country's bliss," may at first seem merely a theatrical stroke, an adventitious reliance upon the audience's knowledge of history, in order to point to a solution that exists only outside the action of these plays. But examination of the trilogy will show that, from the beginning, and even while making the grossest mistakes in government, Henry has prophesied correctly the outcome of this or that immoral act or ambition. And at the instant of his death, he can foresee that the people of the land will come to rue the day Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was born. But the poor king's fate is that of Cassandra: to foretell events truly—and not to be believed.

Henry lacked all the kingly virtues: strength, cunning, and self-sacrifice. For all his prating of self-sacrifice, what we have been shown is self-love. This king had been a better monk: perhaps in the monastery he could not so easily have cloaked and justified his weakness with the garb of piety. Shakespeare has made of him a study, and a pitiless one, in religious egotism. Yet he has not withheld from him, in his last extremity, the grace of a forgiving heart. "For this, amongst the rest, was I ordain'd," says the future Richard III, and stabs him abruptly. King Henry replies to his slayer thus: "Ay, and for much slaughter after this, / O, God forgive my sins, and pardon thee!"

PAUL CLAUDEL'S AMERICAN DRAMA

By JOHN B. REY

During 1893-1894, Paul Claudel was French consul in New York and Boston. Life in the New World was, in certain aspects, quite different from the life he knew in the Old World. The instability of American living, symbolized by its restlessness and its changing moods, greatly impressed him. Claudel had already written the first version of *Tete d'Or* and *La Ville*. It is natural that, in America, he should have conceived an American drama. *L'Echange* is an American play which can best be understood by Americans.

The plot of *L'Echange* is very simple. In its structure, it bears a resemblance to the classical Greek tragedies, which Claudel was reading at the time. In fact, simultaneously with the composition of *L'Echange*, he was translating the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. The setting of *L'Echange* is the Atlantic coast (in the second version, Claudel specified the South Carolina coast) and the time is shortly after the War between the States, a period which Claudel calls the "American Middle Ages." The action takes place all in one day. The story is sustained by four characters. All except one are Americans. The non-American is Marthe, a French girl, brought to the New World by Louis Laine as his wife.

Louis Laine is the incarnation of the restlessness of the American character. He is unhappy in the type of civilization which is being grafted on the American soil. He feels useless and he longs for the old wilderness which was originally American. He has Indian blood which increases his feeling of being an alien. Restless and agitated, he has wandered afar, without being able anywhere ever to recapture that virgin liberty which the savage has lost. Louis Laine owes much to Claudel's special interpretation of the life and character of Arthur Rimbaud, a poet whose work had a capital and significant influence on Claudel's own. "It is to Rimbaud that, on the human plane, I owe my return to faith," Claudel wrote in 1912. "The first glimmer of the truth came to me with the works of that great poet, Arthur Rimbaud, to whom I owe eternal gratitude (and he has had a predominant influence on the formation of my thought). Whoever has been caught once under the spell of Rimbaud is from then on as incapable of freeing himself from it as from the spell of the music of Wagner."

Rimbaud envisioned, in his *Lettre du Voyant*, a new type of poet, one who would see beyond the physical world into the world of spiritual reality and, moreover, one who would invent a new language to make visible the invisible, comprehensible the incomprehensible. But Rimbaud represented, for Claudel, something more than a literary figure. Rimbaud became, for Claudel, a symbol of man's realization of his fallen nature and of his eternal quest for that pristine innocence which he once had and which he longs so desperately to possess again. Louis Laine is the first of a series of restless, roving Claudelian heroes who rebel

John B. Rey, assistant professor of Romance Languages at Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, is especially interested in contemporary French Drama. A recent article entitled "The Search for the Absolute" and dealing with plays of Henry de Montherlant appeared in the September issue of *Modern Drama*, quarterly of the University of Kansas.

against the limitations of time and space and who would take flight from a wingless body which keeps them earthbound.

It was during one of his wanderings that Laine met and married Marthe. The union of Louis Laine and Marthe develops a preoccupation which will become predominant in Claudel's plays: the Claudelian concept of Love. Marthe, as Claudel characterizes her, has a "passion to serve." It should be remembered that Saint Martha is the patron saint of good housewives. Marthe is a daughter of the old soil. It has not been easy for her to pull up her roots and replant them in new soil, so she is not altogether happy in the environment in which she finds herself. Claudel makes reference to the legend of Orpheus. However, in *L'Echange* there is a reversal of roles. Eurydice, in the person of Marthe, has come to the New World to find Orpheus, Louis Laine; and it is Orpheus, not Eurydice, who will disappear and be lost forever. "It is the land of which I have read in a book. A certain virgin whom a god kidnapped in order to bring her here. Then her lover came to fetch her in order to bring her back to her true country. Only be careful! He hadn't the right to turn around! And he did turn around."

Marthe's great virtue is love—she loves with all her heart this wild creature who is her husband. "May our union be as that between the wood and the fire. Love me, and you will be like the fire which has its root in one single spot, and the wind is engulfed therein, bearing away its flames as if they were leaves." But Marthe is willing to sacrifice all for him. And the sacrifice she is called on to make is indeed, on the purely human plane, overwhelming.

Louis Laine is caretaker on the Carolinian plantation of Thomas Pollack Nageoire, a New York banker, who has come South with an actress-mistress, Lechy Elbernon (in the second version, Lechy is his second wife). Thomas Pollack Nageoire is the new type of American who has sprung from the new industrialization and materialism. The only god he recognizes is Money and the only value is Success. This hard-headed businessman has made and lost fortunes. He thinks that all happiness can be bought with money.

Claudel calls Money the unseen actor of his drama. It is the catalyzing agent of the action. Claudel does not make of Thomas Pollack Nageoire a caricatural, or even a satiric, portrait of the American Big Businessman. Indeed, Thomas Pollack Nageoire is the character upon whom, ultimately, God's grace will fall. For he is hard-headed, not idealistic; and he knows the "real" value of things, not their "dream" value. As Marthe points out: "You know the value of things according to whether they are worth more or less. You do not pay yourself off with dreams and you do not content yourself with appearances, and your business is with real things, and through you, no good thing remains useless." As the bold Amalric opposes the timid Mesa in *Partage de Midi*, a later play, so here, in *L'Echange*, Nageoire is the force which will send Louis Laine off to his destruction—and to his salvation. It is Nageoire's money which will be the instrument of salvation. Louis Laine desires liberty, and money is its agent, for money is "the possibility of *something else*": freedom to break ties and wander, freedom to do what one will, freedom to evade the law.

Nageoire covets Laine's wife. What more simple than an *exchange*, a bit of

his money to Laine in return for Marthe? Especially since Laine not only desires his liberty, but feels an attraction for Lechy Elbernon. Indeed, Laine has already possessed Lechy, who represents unbridled liberty which is license. "Love me, for I am beautiful!" she cries to Louis before Marthe. "Love me, for I am love, and I am without rule or law! Be free! Bold desire lives in you above the law like a lion!"

Laine accepts the money and prepares for his departure. Lechy Elbernon, a mercenary creature, tries to retain him, for she belatedly realizes that a husbandless Marthe will the more easily (she thinks) fall into the arms of Thomas Pollack Nageoire. Marthe too realizes that she cannot retain Louis Laine. Indeed, her acceptance of the sacrifice has baffled some critics who have failed to follow through the Claudelian concept of Love.

For Claudel, physical love is always doomed to an unhappy ending when it has itself as its ultimate goal. The lover demands *total possession* of the beloved, and total possession is an impossibility, for in every human creature there is that part which is the reserve of the Creator, God. Marthe comes to realize that her love for Louis Laine has been imperfect, for it has been too greatly dependent on carnal possession and satisfaction. "Oh, Father," Marthe writes to her Father Confessor in France, "he was innocent before he knew me! It is I who taught him sin." Marthe, thus, realizes the imperfectibility of her love precisely at that moment when Laine asks of her the return of his soul, which was *not*, like his body, hers to possess in the first place. "Who are you, then," asks Louis of Marthe, "for me to put thus into your hands my soul?" It is apparent, at this point, that Marthe is the only Christian of the play. For Louis Laine, marriage is a contract to be dissolved at will by the contracting parties. Marthe is silent before Louis Laine, and he interprets this silence as assent and release which allows him to go off in search of his freedom. But Louis Laine does not realize that full liberty comes only in death. Thus, both Marthe and Lechy, as well as Thomas Pollack Nageoire, become God's agents in the forging of Louis Laine's salvation.

To prevent Laine's departure, Lechy commits an outrageous act of jealousy. She sets fire to Nageoire's mansion and has Laine shot by a Negro servant (in the second version, it is implied that she kills him herself). Thomas Pollack Nageoire comes to realize that he can never possess Marthe. In him operate those mysterious forces by which God's will is carried out on earth. Marthe takes into her arms the broken, lifeless body of her husband. She incarnates, for Claudel, the sanctification of the faithless husband by the faithful spouse. *L'Echange* also demonstrates Claudel's faith in the redeeming power of suffering. "It is not this salty water which will purify you," Marthe had said when Louis had surfaced from a plunge into the sea, "but that which flows from your eyes." Like Claudel's later heroines, Marthe comes to know that true love exists only in God; in separation, there is fulfillment; and in death, there is eternal union.

Of interest to Americans are the Americanisms which have crept into the vocabulary of *L'Echange*. In America, Claudel read Walt Whitman; but even before he knew the American's work, he had felt that the language of poetry should be a compound of the commonplace and the sublime. While writing the play, he was wandering in the intricate and complicated labyrinth which is the

American language. He kept a notebook into which he jotted everything which interested his eye and ear. *L'Echange* contains a remarkable number of American idioms. As everyone knows, an idiom cannot be rendered literally into another language. It must be equated, if it is to have any meaning at all. Yet Claudel has rendered several of them, carried them over word for word from English to French. An American will recognize: *Vous n'avez pas un sou, un sou rouge* (You haven't a cent, a red cent); *Ils sont dans l'eau chaude* (They're in hot water, i.e. in difficulties); *Il faut du nerf* (It takes nerve); *faire du slumming* (to go slumming); *J'ai bluffé* (I've been bluffing); *Vous savez combien je care pour vous* (You know how much I care for you).

There are also references to American Sunday blue laws; to *une bouteille d'eau-de-feu* (a bottle of fire-water, the old Indian term for liquor). Although it is an anachronism, we learn that Lechy Elbernon had danced in the *Follies*. In the West, Louis Laine wants to be a *conductor de diligence* (a stage coach driver). He wears a checkerboard plaid shirt which was then, as now, common in America, but not in Claudel's native France. Thomas Pollack Nageoire constantly iterates that in life *il faut faire de la monnaie* (one must make money). Claudel recalls the child sent to the corner saloon to get a pitcher of beer. He talks about "houses of Ethics, which are some sort of society of Culture," referring to that American institution known as the Ethical Culture Society. He ends one of his acts with a phonetical variation of the children's chant of *Hickory dickory dock*. He speaks of marriages performed by justices of the peace who conduct other businesses on the side. And he does not omit to put into the mouth of one of his characters an American's favorite epithet—*Damn Fool!*

THE CHRISTIAN SIDE OF BRECHT?

An Examination of "The Caucasian Chalk Circle"

By LEONE J. MARINELLO

Much has been said and much has been written about Brecht the Marxist, Brecht the Communist, and Brecht the propagandist extraordinary of the party line. Too little has been said and too little has been written about Brecht the poet and Brecht the humanitarian. Almost nothing has been said and almost nothing has been written about the possibility that Brecht may have a Christian side. Does Brecht have a Christian side?

Having just directed Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, this writer has become convinced that Brecht's moral values as expressed in this play are fundamentally Christian in nature. The intention here is to emphasize the positive principles and virtues which Brecht uses as foundation stones for his parable, and to point out their Christian character as they exist in the text.¹ Because Brecht has an extraordinary sense of theatre, these values, naturally, are more vividly brought to life in performance. For this reason there is a wonderfully exciting sense of discovery in production in Brecht's *The Chalk Circle*.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle is a moral play. Despite the framework of revolution, violence, corruption, and injustice, the basic spirit of the play emerges as one of love and tenderness. The story of *The Chalk Circle* is a simple and straightforward one. The Governor of a Caucasian city is overthrown by revolutionary forces directed by his brother. The Governor is beheaded, and his family and supporters are forced to flee the city for their lives. So preoccupied with saving her fine clothes and jewels, the Governor's Wife leaves her baby behind. In the confusion that follows, Grusha, a young kitchen maid, finds herself alone with the child. Part One of the play is a chronicle of Grusha's trials to save the child from the pursuing soldiers, and of her daily deepening love for him. After several years of hardships and humiliations, Grusha is arrested by the Governor's soldiers. The revolution has been broken and the again powerful Governor's Wife wants her child and heir back. Grusha is brought to trial for having taken the boy and passed him off as her own. Part Two concerns itself with the village recorder, Azdak. It shows how he became judge, and how he judged. He presides at Grusha's trial and employs the Chalk Circle test to establish the true mother of the child. The play is an exploration of the virtues of charity and justice. The villains are the exploiters and violaters of these virtues; the heroes are the perpetrators of these virtues. Grusha and Azdak are the agents of charity and justice. They are good because they desire to do good and actuate the good. They can be favorably

¹ Bertolt Brecht, *Parables for the Theatre: The Good Woman of Setzuan and The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, trans. Eric and Maja Bentley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), pp. 109-189.

Mr. Marinello is Associate Professor of Speech and Director of Dramatics at John Carroll University, Cleveland.

measured by Christ's own yardstick: "By their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:16).

The play affirms the essential goodness of man. It assumes that the good man is the one who wills the good, desires the good, knows the good, and does the good. If Brecht were to step out and boldly state his theme, he may well address the audience with these words of St. Paul to the Romans: "Let love be without pretense. Hate what is evil, hold to what is good. Love one another with fraternal charity, anticipating one another with honor. . . . Weep with those who weep. . . . Do not set your mind on high things but condescend to the lowly. . . . Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:9-21). This statement on fraternal charity sums up fairly well Brecht's theme as exemplified by the activities of Grusha, and, to a lesser degree, Azdak. It also provides an insight into Brecht's enduring faith in his fellow man, and sustains this writer's belief that here Brecht certainly does not silence the truth that the individual's most heroic and noble moments are those in which he acts, sometimes against great odds, according to the traditional requirements of a good Christian life.

The Chalk Circle is Brecht's statement of the human condition. He opposes the evil in men to the good in men. The goodness in men is victorious. This balance on the side of virtue affirms in a very real way Brecht's faith in man. He believes in the validity of the clean and pure in man's nature. Brecht has genuine compassion for the good man. He understands how difficult it is to be good in a corrupt and violent world. Yet, he dares to posit faith in man's conscience and man's ability to purge the brute within him by the use of this conscience. The Communist argument may be that Grusha's and Azdak's virtues are natural ones arising from a sense of duty towards the people. It is obvious from the text that the two main characters are not motivated by the plight of the *people* but by the plight of *individuals*. The conscience of each of them has been formed by the tenets of the Christian tradition and the natural law not by the dogma "that is good which promotes Communism." It is also noteworthy that Brecht depicts a revolution against despotism which is at least as bad as that which it overthrows, and that he shows a despot (the Grand Duke) as a man capable of gratitude. His concern is with individuals, therefore, not with their politics.

"Terrible is the temptation of goodness." (I.1.124.) This shattering line crystallizes Brecht's theme that there is a force at work within us, a light which breaks the power of darkness over the world. More than anything else, Brecht wants us to believe in those qualities that make human beings so much more than animals. The longing to love and care: these are the roots that anchor the individual to humanity. He believes in the dignity of man; the brotherhood of man. That is why in the play, degradation, violence, and deceit are overcome by nobility, love, and honor. And that is why Brecht achieves a dimension beyond the truth of the immediate circumstance. He reveals to us the depth and complexity and richness of the human spirit. Being a great poet, he deepens and enriches our understanding of moral values; moral values that anyone serious and generous cannot fail to interpret affirmatively. One may even mention the traditional significance in his use of the term "Parables" in the collective title of his work.

In one sense, the drama is the most demanding of all literary forms. If the

playwright does not express his theme by the words or actions of his people, it remains unexpressed. He may not fall back upon long descriptive passages as does the novelist. To overcome this limitation to some extent, Brecht employs the classic device of The Story Teller and The Chorus to perform a number of functions: they open and close a scene; they comment on the action to follow; they describe the action taking place; they ask questions; they philosophize; they address the characters; they speak the thoughts of the people. A close examination of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* will reveal at once, therefore, Brecht's artistry and his theme.

The play begins with the Governor and his family going to church. Simon, a palace guard, jokes with Grusha. It is obvious that they are interested in each other. The Fat Prince, brother of the Governor, gives the signal for the revolution to begin. The Governor is taken prisoner, and his followers are panic-stricken. In the frenzy that ensues, Simon finds Grusha and asks for her hand. Their betrothal is solemnized with the offering and acceptance of the primary symbol of Christian unity, the cross. Brecht has Simon take the cross from his neck and hang it round Grusha's neck. To strengthen this contract, Grusha touchingly pledges her troth by taking the vow of chastity:

When you come back from the battle
No boots will lie before the door
The pillow beside mine will be empty
And my mouth will be unknissed.
When you return, when you return
You will be able to say: All is as it was. (I.1.119.)

Their farewell is tender and charming. The Governor's Wife enters with her trunks and servants. A nurse holds the child. Discovering that her saffron-colored boots have been left behind, she orders the nurse to put the child down and run back for the boots. A moment later the Governor's Wife rides away without the child. Discovering the mother gone and the child left behind, the nurse hands the child to Grusha to hold for a moment. The nurse never returns. All the servants then try to persuade Grusha to abandon the child and flee for her life. When an older woman urges her to do so with the argument that the child is as dangerous as if he had the plague, she answers stubbornly, "He hasn't got the plague. He looks at me! He's human." (I.1.123.)

Grusha finally puts the child down when she herself is faced with desertion by her friends. She tries not to look at him as she prepares to escape. All the inner forces of self-preservation and self-interest struggle against her natural desire to help the child. As she reaches the gate, she thinks she hears the child call to her for help. In this scene, Brecht reaches the heights of the poetic expression of a moral truth. He tells us that to ignore a person's cry for help is to surrender the human within your soul, and, if this happens, the spiritual man is ruined. In the words of The Story Teller:

Know, woman, he who hears not a cry for help
But passes by with troubled ears will never hear
The gentle call of a lover nor the blackbird at dawn

Nor the happy sigh of the exhausted grape-picker
As the Angelus rings. (I.1.124.)

Grusha walks back to the child for one more look. She hopes someone else may come along—anyone. The night wears on and no one comes. It is here that Brecht gives his mighty theme line, "Terrible is the temptation of goodness!" The longer she sits with the child, watching its soft breathing; touching its little fists, the stronger the temptation, until finally she takes up the child and carries it off. Grusha fulfills the requirements of true charity as expressed by St. John in the First Epistle: "He who has the goods of this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him? My dear children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth." (3:17-18.)

Grusha now begins her many trials to save the child. Her destination is the house of her brother. Unaware that she is being pursued by mercenary soldiers, she stops to buy the hungry child some milk from a hard-hearted peasant. He takes a large portion of her small savings. When she reaches a safe distance from the city, she decides to leave the child on the doorstep of a peasant woman she has been secretly observing. The farm has plenty of milk, and the woman appears to be kind. The child will be better off here than with her. Gently bidding the child farewell, she hides behind a tree to see what happens. When the peasant woman finds the child, her husband insists that it be taken to the village priest. It is significant that Brecht uses the priest as a symbol of refuge and charity. The wife's determination to care for the child instead, is based not upon any distrust of the priest but rather upon her conviction that the child needs a mother. She says, "What will the priest do with it? It needs a mother." (I.2.129-130.) With this she enters the house and her husband, defeated, follows.

Grusha is happy that the child has found new parents. As she turns to leave, she is questioned by The Story Teller and The Chorus replies for her:

And why so sad?
Because I'm single and free, I'm sad.
Like one robbed, one newly poor. (I.2.130.)

Now that the child is gone, Grusha reflects the loneliness that comes to a person when he is relieved of responsibility. Brecht knows that sacrifice cements a firm bond between human beings. The more the sacrifice, the deeper the pain and the greater the sense of loss. He is stating here that in order to belong, man must feel needed. Freedom comes only with the realization of personal responsibility. He knows that the individual is never more free than when burdened with the love and welfare of other individuals. Loneliness, alienation, loss of connection come with the absence of someone to love and care for. Identity comes with relating to others. This involvement is basic. The individual is important when he is able to give of himself. These people who are conscious of their responsibilities are the heroes of Brecht's play. The lovers and not the haters illumine *The Chalk Circle*.

Grusha walks a short distance before the soldiers overtake her. They question

her about the child, Michael. Panic-stricken, she runs off to save him. She has not abdicated her responsibility to the child. The Story Teller urges her on, "Help the helpless child, helpless girl." Note that she is called "helpless." The helpless to help the helpless: is this not the finest refinement of personal sacrifice? The Chorus observes, "In the bloodiest times There are kind people." (1.2.131.) These lines affirm the faith that Brecht has in mankind. Brecht gives weight to this point with the phrase "in the bloodiest times." Paradoxically, the goodness of man shines most brilliantly in the indirect lighting of turmoil rather than in the steady, direct sunlight of peaceful times. The implication here is, and this writer does not feel that he is forcing Brecht, that Brecht truly believes in the imperishable nobility of man: the ultimate triumph of human courage and dignity in the face of terrible odds. This is Brecht's statement on the reality of man's spiritual integrity.

Having rescued Michael from the soldiers, Grusha decides to adopt him. Brecht repeats his theme that sacrifice makes one love more. Grusha says:

Since I've carried you too long
And with sore feet
Since the milk was too dear
I grew fond of you.
(I wouldn't be without you any more.) (1.2.134.)

To get to her brother's house, Grusha must cross a rope bridge over a deep abyss. The bridge is rotten. Three merchants, two men and a woman, stand undecided before the unsafe bridge. At first they mock her efforts to cross. When they become aware of the nature of her plight and discover the approach of the soldiers, they disregard their own safety and help her to escape across. These are the "kind people" of whom The Chorus spoke earlier.

For seven days, Grusha, sick and exhausted, trudges on to her brother's house. Her tortuous way is sustained by the lovely thoughts she has of her brother's happy welcome: how he will embrace her, and proudly present her to his wife, and how he will invite her and Michael to sit at the table with them. The helpless girl's dreams and hope for refuge are shattered when she discovers that her sister-in-law is a cold, selfish woman who looks upon Grusha as an intruder. Her cowardly brother, completely dominated by his wife, gives Grusha little aid and comfort. His allusions to his wife as being "religious" sharpen the hypocrisy of the pair. These pretenders mock the words of St. James: "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (1:22.)

Several months pass and then the cowardly brother tells Grusha that the fatherless Michael will bring scandal to them all. She will have to get married. Grusha protests, "But I can't marry anyone! I must wait for Simon Shashava." Her brother replies that she doesn't need a real husband, only a husband on paper; that there is a sick peasant on his death bed, whose mother is willing to marry off for a price. Again Grusha's thoughts are for Michael's welfare; "I could do with a document with stamps on it for Michael." (1.3.142.) A stamped paper, a father's name, these are proof against discovery as Michael Abashwili, son and heir of the late Governor Georgi Abashwili, and his wife, Natella Abashwili. She

consents that Michael would be safe at last. The brother runs out to make the arrangements.

Grusha gently chides Michael for her predicament: "Michael, you cause a lot of fuss. I came to you as the pear tree comes to the sparrow. And because a Christian bends down and picks up a crust of bread so nothing will go to waste." (I.3.143.) The reader's attention is called to the fact that Grusha refers to herself as a "Christian." She also identifies herself as the "pear tree" who gives of itself to the "sparrow" (Michael). This is the perfect act of Christian sacrifice. There can be no doubt, if one is willing to believe his own eyes and the validity of the printed words of the text, that Brecht is distinctly and precisely labeling his Grusha a Christian. It follows, therefore, that he also gives her the character of a Christian and motivates her actions upon Christian principles—the natural law and the Christian revelation. And that it is due to Grusha's spiritual goodness that she acts as she does and not because of some extraneous political conviction. She is genuinely interested in Michael's welfare and not in Michael's politics. Is it possible that Grusha is a fake, and that Brecht is using her as a shield for some secret intention; that she is a subterfuge for communistic propaganda? If so, what's the point? When does the propaganda come out from behind its mask and become recognizable or is this nebulous propaganda purposefully subterranean? To what degree? Half? Four-fifths? Completely? Then it fails as propaganda. What nonsense, why look for that which is not there, when what is there is explicitly stated, spelled out, and punctuated. Grusha calls herself a Christian, and as such, she is heir to all that being a Christian implies. It now remains for us to see whether or not she measures up to her heritage.

Grusha's fraudulent marriage ceremony is conducted by a drunken and corrupt "monk"! It is witnessed by the greedy mother-in-law and the impatient cowardly brother. The husband-to-be lies deathly still on a cot; Grusha does not look at him; the phony rite is quickly over. A few minutes later, the "dying" peasant comes fully to life when he hears that the war is over and that no one else will be drafted. Grusha is faced with the unexpected reality of a very-much-alive husband. He is a vulgar brute, and determined to bend Grusha to his will. For Michael's sake, she suffers this humiliating alliance for two years. One day while washing clothes in the stream, Simon appears. They are happy in this reunion until he discovers that Grusha has a child. He bitterly relates his war experiences and his keeping of their troth. Grusha tries to assure him that she, too, has been faithful, and attempts to explain Michael's presence without revealing his identity. She describes how she found the helpless child, and of her desperate efforts to care for him:

I had to bend down for crumbs on the floor
I had to rend myself for that which was not mine
That which was strange. (I.3.154.)

Simon is unmoved and demands the return of the cross he gave her (Grusha still wears the cross around her neck). At this moment, two soldiers enter with Michael. They confront her with documents for his custody. A soldier asks, "Is this your child?" Grusha is caught in a dilemma. If she answers negatively; she may save Simon's love but lose Michael. The soldiers await her answer. She looks

at Michael, and then at the angry Simon who a moment before had started to leave. Desperately she answers, "Yes." (I.3.154.) Michael is too precious and must come before her or Simon. Her sacrifice is in vain. Simon leaves and the soldiers take Michael away to the city. Part One ends with Grusha running after the soldiers and Michael.

Part Two is the story of Azdak. It begins with an act of charity. Azdak finds a fugitive and shelters him. While feeding the old man, Shauwa, a policeman, comes and scolds Azdak for stealing a rabbit from the Prince. Azdak rebukes him: "Shauwa, Shauwa, shame on you. . . . I catch a rabbit, but you catch a man. Man is made in God's image. Not so a rabbit, you know that. I'm a rabbit-eater, but you're a man-eater, Shauwa. And God will pass judgment on you. Shauwa, go home and repent." (II.1.157.)

When Shauwa leaves, Azdak learns that the old beggar is the Grand Duke on the run. Azdak is ashamed that he helped the old despot to escape, and accuses himself to the soldiers (Ironshirts). Heed the fact that Azdak is unable to betray a helpless soul. "Man is made in God's image", he said earlier. It is not in him to be a "man-eater." Also, he believes in the judgment of God. He does not fear the judgment of man. That is why he can practice Christian charity, helping a helpless old man, and then deliberately offer himself up to civil authority. Azdak, like Grusha, motivates his actions on the higher authority of the natural law of God. He, too, is concerned with the welfare of the individual and not with that individual's politics. He may not, as in the case of the Grand Duke, agree with the person's political convictions or approve of their official actions, but he does not allow these considerations to stand in the way of his Christian values. He rightly leaves their judgment to God. The Ironshirts are amused at his apparent madness, for only mad men accuse themselves, and then elect him the new judge, because as the First Ironshirt says, "The judge was always a rascal! Now the rascal shall be a judge." (II.1.166.)

Judge Azdak dispenses justice with native wit and irony. The case of the Old Woman, although broad farce on one level, makes a moral point. Three farmers have accused an old woman of stealing a cow from one, a ham from another, and killing the cows of the third when he insisted that she pay her rent. The old woman explains that one night a bearded man came to her house and said, "My dear woman, I am the miracle-working Saint Banditus and because your son has been killed in the war, I bring you this cow as a souvenir. Take good care of it." (II.1.171.) The ham flew through the window one morning and hit her in the back. And as for the rent, Saint Banditus took care of that, too. The old woman adds, "I ask Your Honor, was there ever a time when a poor old woman could get a ham without a miracle?" Azdak replies, "Granny, that's a question that strikes straight at the Court's heart." He sits her in the judge's chair, begs her mercy, and bellows at the farmers, "Admit you don't believe in miracles, you atheists! Each of you is sentenced to pay five hundred piasters! For your godlessness! Get out!" (II.1.172.)

For two years, Azdak's judgeship is a beneficial one. The helpless and the poor finally have their day in court. The wolves and man-eaters have met their match in Azdak.

We are brought to the day of Grusha's trial. Judge Azdak and the accused Grusha will now meet face to face. Michael's future is at stake. When the scene opens, an interesting exchange takes place between the earthy cook and Grusha. The cook cannot understand why Grusha insists on keeping the child when times are so hard. The girl answers that she brought Michael up and that he is hers. The cook observes, "And even a borrowed coat keeps a man warm, hm?" (II.2.176.)

Simon enters and offers to swear that he is the father of the child. Grusha observes that has always been the case. The Governor's Wife, the Adjutant, and her two lawyers arrive. The wolf pack has finally caught up with Azdak, and he is dragged in to be hanged. He is saved from the gallows by the arrival of a dispatch from the again powerful Grand Duke who remembers the night Azdak saved his life. He officially appoints Azdak judge. Azdak's act of charity not only saves his own life, but makes it possible for him to become a real judge. This is a remarkable event. Not only is the tyrant's personal gratitude publicly expressed, but he, too, disregards the individual's politics (he is well aware of Azdak's political opposition), and rewards him with an office vital to the common good. It is very doubtful that this action is consistent with good communistic practice. Yet, here Brecht does exactly that. He knows that the Communist system demands total control of men's lives, and also demands total control of men's minds. We are all painfully aware of Communism's unrelenting philosophy of un-freedom. Brecht is also aware of the iron rule that only a good, sincere, true, tried-and-tested Communist Party member can aspire to a high position. Does he allow this contradiction to happen in *The Chalk Circle* because he knows that Communism is in human terms a tragic failure? Does he acknowledge that its failure is human and spiritual? Can this be his reason for allowing Azdak to maintain his personal and political freedom? One can only speculate on the reason why, but the fact of the what—that he does permit this incongruity—cannot be reasonably brushed aside or denied.

The case before Azdak is a simple one. Two women claim the child, Michael. One is his natural mother who bore him, the other is his foster mother who raised him. The court asks each to explain her case. Grusha exclaims that the child is hers. Azdak replies that she will have to prove it, and adds that he is interested in hearing why he should assign the child to her. Grusha says, "I brought him up as the priest says 'according to my best knowledge and conscience'." (II.2.181.) The reader can not deny that it is of significant importance to the validity of this writer's purpose to grasp the fact that Grusha specifically mentions the name "priest" and that she relates him to his primary function of teaching the fundamental norm for a good Christian life—according to the individual's knowledge and conscience. This is Christian moral guidance, pure and simple, and a key to Grusha's whole character and motive for acting. This is a clear statement of belief in spiritual values that has been proved over and over again by her deeds. Again this writer would like to point out that Grusha's actions are guided by her own conscience and not by the conscience of the State or a political party. Communism does not permit the free exercise of the individual conscience only of the collective one, which is based on the standard of advancing the material needs of the State and not the spiritual needs of the individual.

It is now the Governor's Wife's turn. The First Lawyer makes a point of informing the court that Grusha does not claim blood ties with the child. The Governor's Wife describes the anxieties she has suffered over her lost son. Then the Second Lawyer inadvertently reveals that Michael's custody will also decide the disposition of the vast Abashwili estates. The other Lawyer quickly interjects that, although it is true that his client needs the custody of the child in order to obtain the rights to the estates, it still remains a fact that the primary purpose is to regain the lost child. Judge Azdak cuts him short with, "Stop! The Court is touched by the mention of the estates. It's a proof of human feeling." (II.2.182.)

Azdak beckons Grusha to him and looks deep into her heart. He tells her that he does not believe the child is hers, and that if she gave up her claim, he would be rich. He would have lands, horses, servants, soldiers, beggars, and petitioners. Doesn't she want him to be rich? Grusha is silent, but The Story Teller speaks her thoughts. She thinks that such wealth and power can corrupt and ruin her beloved Michael. That it is far better for him to be hungry than to be the cause of hunger. She concludes, "Darkness he will have to fear/But not the sun." (II.2.186.) She knows that there is no profit in gaining the world and losing one's immortal soul. Being fully aware of the corroding effect of power and wealth, she wants to keep Michael clean and pure. Perhaps, she recalls Christ's words on the danger of riches, "With what difficulty will they who have riches enter the Kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through an eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." (Luke 18:24-26.) Azdak tells the girl, "I understand you, Woman."

Azdak, having heard both sides, must now make a decision. He is obliged to choose a mother for the child. He calls for the famous test of the Chalk Circle to establish the true mother of the child. Michael is brought in and placed in the center of the circle. Each mother is instructed to stand on opposite sides of the circle and to take the child by the hand. At a given signal, each must try to pull the child out of the circle. Azdak says, "The true mother will be she who has the strength to pull the child out of the circle toward herself." (II.2.187.)

The lawyers object that Grusha will win for she is used to physical work. Azdak overrules, and the test is on. The Governor's Wife pulls Michael out of the circle. Grusha did not pull. Azdak scolds her and conducts the test once more. Again Grusha lets go of Michael and cries out in despair, "I brought him up! Am I to tear him to pieces? I can't do it!" The Governor's Wife and her lawyers are jubilant. Azdak rises and says to Grusha, "Take your child and be off. I advise you not to stay in the city with him." (II.2.187.) He turns to the thunderstruck Governor's Wife and her lawyers and proclaims that all the Abashwili estates will be turned into a playground for children bearing his name.

In his last official act, Azdak annuls Grusha's invalid marriage to the sick peasant. She is free now to have Simon as well as Michael. Grusha's charity, kindness, mercy, humility, meekness, and patience are at last rewarded. These are the Christian virtues that Grusha possesses in abundance.

Why does Azdak give Michael to Grusha? The play shows us that his natural mother is jaded and unfit. The Story Teller adds, "That what there is shall go

to those who are good for it,/Thus: the children to the motherly, that they prosper." (II.2.189.) Who prospers? The mother? The State? The child? Of course, the child. The welfare of the child is the guiding moral and legal principle here. Doesn't the play prove beyond any doubt that Grusha is exceedingly more "motherly" than the Governor's Wife, and worthy of his custody? Doesn't Brecht carefully define through the events in his play, by word and deed, that the *true* mother is determined by the condition of her heart—the disposition to love and to cherish and to nourish the spirit? And doesn't Grusha admirably satisfy these characteristics? No doubt of it! The overwhelming internal evidence of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* must move even the most prejudiced of readers to agree that it is so.

The play ends in a glow of joy and hope. Grusha, Simon, and Michael dance their faith in a happy future. Christian charity and justice have won over the forces of hate and injustice. Brecht's message is unmistakable and clear. The virtuous man, pure in mind and heart, will triumph in the end, and he will inherit the earth.

A final word on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. This writer is cognizant of the so-called Prologue to the play. Does it affect the play's values? Does it change the tone of the play, its spirit, its direction, or its purpose? The writer does not think so. The Prologue, if genuine, is not integral to the play's structure. The fact that the play can be and is staged separately without violating its essential values proves this. It is scarcely good playwriting to introduce a group of characters, initiate a problem, and then suddenly to drop all. This is not even good political-propaganda technique. If the playwright did intend to write Communist propaganda, would he have not brought in the group at the end of the play, allowed them some discussion regarding the merits of the story, and permitted the original unbelievers to admit the justness of the problem's solution? Communist propaganda does not leave loose ends. It is ruthlessly neat. *The Chalk Circle* concerns itself with Grusha's relationship to Michael. There is a great difference between Grusha's concern with Michael's spiritual welfare, and the peasants' concern with their own material welfare. There is a great difference between a child and a piece of land. Because of these reasons, among others, this writer has considered the Prologue to be immaterial and irrelevant, and has purposely directed the reader's attention to the abundant evidence of Brecht's Christian values as found by an internal examination of the Bentleys' text.

ENGLISH DRAMA IN SEARCH OF A MODERN STYLE

By GABRIEL GERSH

The English theatre emerged from World War II with a cultural prestige such as it had not known for generations. Nothing could ever restore drama to the center of English life where it was in Elizabethan days, but at the war's end, it was possible to believe that it had been brought a little nearer to the center. All over England, a great many people, young and old, began to feel themselves at home again in the theatre. This prestige was something that had come about fortuitously, and it rested on no very solid basis.

It had been readily assumed in 1939 that the only thing warranted to relieve the strain of war was light frivolity. Against all precedent, audiences were found to be looking for serious entertainment. The unexpected need was met largely by reviving the classics, and it became evident that the new audiences were developing an extraordinary capacity for responding sympathetically to anything of quality. The theatre, within the limitations of the time, rose splendidly to the opportunity.

In this exciting atmosphere, the art of the actor flourished, and the London stage at the end of the war astonished and enchanted foreign visitors with the brilliance of its acting and directing, and its wide range of plays based on language of authentic richness and intensity. The English theatre seemed, for once, to have purpose beyond mere amusement; it could be identified clearly with the art of drama.

This prestige would have been difficult to maintain in the most favorable circumstances, and as things have turned out, it is perhaps surprising that so much of it survives to this day. It was easy for a time to overlook the obvious: in the reigning combination of audience, actor, and play, the play was, more often than not, a revival.

Rich as is the English dramatic heritage, it is exhaustible within a given period. Without the timely stimulus of serious modern drama it really could not be expected to support the audience and actor indefinitely. The subsequent struggle to create this drama is the spiritual history of the postwar English theatre. It has given rise to some sharp disappointments, but it has been an exciting business and it still goes on.

It might have been less exciting and more decisive if it had simply been a matter of carrying on an established tradition. But those who have taken an active part in the English theatre have been moved more or less unconsciously by the sense of obeying a deeper theatrical need—the need for some sort of change in

Mr. Gersh of Elmhurst, New York, has contributed to America, Commonweal, The Catholic World, and other publications here and abroad.

dramatic form. For realism, though it remains the English theatre's most familiar convention, has become through the years of its fulfillment increasingly irksome to all but one or two major playwrights.

Even those whose mastery of the English stage has been won through the use of it are restless in its fetters, and in the hands of lesser writers, "the candid representation of the natural world" has tended to fob off theatregoers with imitation for representation and with photography for interpretation. The desire to loosen their fetters led the realists themselves into a variety of experiments in elaborate stagecraft and into constructive ingenuity. These experiments, so far from achieving greater depth and intensification of illusion, mostly served only to deepen the general awareness that realism was an inadequate method for treating the complexities of a world in which all the old values were held up for revaluation and the inner life of the individual had assumed a new importance.

Audiences seem in retrospect to have watched with sympathetic curiosity the attempts to broaden a convention which they had once cherished above all others. They had not lost the catholicity of taste given them by their wartime education in the classics, and looked on no convention as sacrosanct. The general swing of thought might be said to be away from realism. It was a movement which seemed to bypass romance and reach up towards fantasy, even perhaps to mysticism. Audiences were obviously ready to be pleasantly dazzled by the skill with which Christopher Fry set words dancing through a loose arrangement of witty ballets. Delight in language was something else that had come to them through the still-frequent revivals. But no doubt, they noted Christopher Fry's unwillingness to combine carefree words with a satisfactory dramatic structure. There was a sad lack of tension in his evenings of exuberant wordplay. Rather more surprisingly, audiences gave T.S. Eliot their attention when he made his attempts to present contemporary life in the form of poetic drama.

The Cocktail Party, when all is said and done, is the most important thing that has happened to the English theatre in the last fifteen years. Its importance does not depend altogether on its strict dramatic merits, nor even on its success in staking out a place on the modern stage for poetic drama, but rather on the powerful suggestion that the play makes language capable of cutting through the ephemeral and superficial to what is vital and of universal importance in the problems with which the theatre is attempting to deal.

Whatever gains have been made in the struggle to create a new drama with a form of its own, progress has been lessened by the lack of new young writers to follow them up. The pioneers have no reason to complain of the support given them by the public, which has liked their work and wished there were more of it, but they have looked in vain for the backing of younger writers. Some attribute this chronic shortage to the shortsightedness of managers, some to the caprices of actors, some to the egoism of producers, and some to the Lord Chamberlain, but, wherever the blame ought to be placed, the fact remains that in the past few years, the English stage has had lamentably few good plays from young writers. This plight is worse now that so many of the little theatres, faced with steadily rising costs, have been forced to close; for at the Mercury, Embassy, the "Q," or the New Boltons, the author of an apprentice play could hope to see how it

worked on the stage and could keep in touch with the realities of theatrical production.

One result has been that the London theatre has been living more and more on plays imported from France and America, and for a few seasons, the battle for a style of its own has been manifestly in a state of suspension. This season there have been some good native plays but nobody can consider the prospect without some disquiet. It is likely that many who looked to the theatre with eagerness at the end of the war now find much of what they want in the B.B.C.'s admirably selected programs of old and new plays, and it is disconcerting to hear that many of the intelligent young now keep a closer eye on the cinema than on the theatre.

But the theatre has a wonderful way of holding on through apparently disastrous fluctuations of taste, and even though there are no new theatrical trends today, it would be unwise to prophesy the doom of the English theatre, as a few English critics have done. It is true that the movement to restore poetry to the stage, so very much alive several years ago, is quiescent now, but the Royal Court has the signs of becoming "a writer's theatre" and has caught the imagination of the young playgoer.

The young English playgoer would seem to be indifferent as to whether prose or poetry is to be the medium of the new drama. All that concerns him is that the play shall have a hard rational core and that its ideas and its language shall be alive, intelligent, and contemporary; and since he distrusts aestheticism, conventional manners, and much of what pretends to be liberal virtue, he finds no offense in a certain brutality of approach. He finds too much of English theatre writing polite, skillful, passionless, and empty of meaning. Older English playgoers tend to agree with him; and it may be that when English playwrights produce a few distinguished plays, all theatregoers will be able to feel that the English theatre has resumed the temporarily suspended struggle to create a style of its own.

DRAMA BOOKSHELF

THE ART OF THE THEATRE. By Henri Gheon. Translated by Adele M. Fiske. Introduction by Michel Saint-Denis. A Dramabook. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961; pp. 100. \$1.25.

"What is not clear is not French," runs the old proverb. This book is French and it is also clear in a smooth and readable translation. It is a small book with fewer than one hundred pages of text, but it should prove inspiring to those interested in the Catholic theatre.

The Art of the Theatre consists of four lectures delivered in 1923, and an appendix added fifteen years later. In 1923, Jacques Copeau asked Henri Gheon to give a series of talks to an assembly of actors, students, and friends. These were given in Copeau's theatre, the Vieux-Colombier.

It should be remembered that in these lectures Gheon is speaking as a practical playwright who had staged his own plays, as a Catholic who wished to see drama once more allied to the Church, and as a Thomistic philosopher who admires Maritain.

In the first discourse, "Conditions of Dramatic Art," Gheon states the principles which he thinks should govern the writing of plays. They seem eminently sensible. How profitable, for instance, for an embryonic playwright to read: "Some even hold that no audience is needed at all, but this is extreme, monstrous—for the *sine qua non* of all art is to be communicable." (p. 7.) He warns the writer not to leave too much to the producer: "His [the dramatist's] very words must of themselves evoke image, gesture, movement, action, life; to add all this afterward is a poor artifice." (p. 9.) This first lecture alone forms a very practical guide to playwriting.

There is one other important principle stressed in this first chapter and referred to throughout the book: that drama is a social art. Its meaning and language must be clear to all. In his own words:

Yes, the day when author and spectator—and, I may add, actor also, for he is the hyphen between them—are one, and stand together on the same intellectual and moral ground. For communion we need such ground. (p. 15.)

Lectures Two: "From the Origins to the Classical Age," and Three: "From *Hernani* to the Theatre Libre of Antoine," are summarized, perhaps too much so, with the main stress always in the French theatre. Some readers will feel that his explanation of Romantic drama of the nineteenth century is considerably oversimplified; others will wish that he had said more about Victor Hugo's controversial *Hernani*.

Catholic readers will be especially interested in Lecture Four: "From the Vieux-Colombier to the *Plays for the Faithful*." Here he relates his experiences

with plays on religious subjects, and makes his plea for a Catholic theatre, particularly for a Catholic parish theatre. He does not insist that Catholic writers abandon the secular stage; however he advises them:

But in the meantime let me speak to the 'faithful' (le peuple fidele) meet them on the common ground of faith. If art is man's highest expression, what right have we to exclude from it the thoughts and feelings by which he raises himself to God? (pp. 78-79.)

Altogether, *The Art of the Theatre* is a readable, practical, and stimulating guide both to the composition of and to the appreciation of drama; that art to which, twice in the history of culture, religion gave birth.

Rev. J. C. Lehane, C.M.
De Paul University, Chicago

THE NOH DRAMA: TEN PLAYS FROM THE JAPANESE. Japanese Classics Translation Committee. Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1960; pp. 192. \$4.75.

The Noh drama, approximately five hundred years old, is one of the oldest forms of Japanese drama. There are about three hundred of these delightful plays extant. This form of drama, requiring a specific type of stage, combines the lyric, music, and symbolic dance, producing a strong emotional appeal.

The Noh Drama; Ten Plays From The Japanese, translated over a fourteen-year period by the Japanese Classics Translation Committee sponsored by UNESCO, is excellent fare for the devotee of drama.

The sources of the Noh plays are to be found in the Chinese and Japanese poems, ninth to twelfth centuries. Myth, legend, history, and the Gothic are to be found in these poems; and it is these elements that become the subjects of the plays. Besides their artistic value, these plays are important because they exemplify the beliefs, hopes, and philosophical and religious aspirations of the people at the time in which they were written.

Each play is a vignette and usually five of them are presented in a specific program. This program contains five classes of plays: *Waki*, in which the hero is a member of the deity; *Asura*, in which the hero is a Medieval warrior, *Kazuramono*, in which the protagonist is a woman; *Kyojo-mono*, in which the protagonist is a mad woman; and *Kiri*, in which supernatural beings are the protagonists. Five characters are generally presented in each play, and only the main actor wears a mask. There is also a chorus which is composed of eight to ten persons whose chief role appears to be that of singing in order to accompany the dance. The role of the Noh chorus, therefore, is unlike that of the Classical Greek chorus.

These plays deal in one way or other with some aspect of Buddhism. The relationship of man, external nature, and Buddhism are artfully intermingled and presented in such a delicate fashion that one feels that he is experiencing the

fragility of a Botticelli. The characters appear to be more types than real humans and this is probably so because of the universality of the subjects of the plays. Setting plays an important part because of the inter-relationship of man, external nature, and Buddhism. There is a certain unity of theme in the plays because of the basic inter-relationships contained therein. There is also a unity created from play to play by the tone of gentle sadness which prevails.

The translation is excellent (despite the fact that there is something of the original always lost in translation) enabling the reader to share the deep experiences and moods of the Oriental.

One may say that the Classics Translation Committee has done an excellent job and UNESCO, who sponsored this outstanding series, has given us a key to the mind and heart of the Eastern world.

Robert A. Lodge, Ph. D.
University of Scranton

PATTERNS IN SHAKESPEARIAN TRAGEDY. By Irving Ribner. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960; pp. 205. \$4.50.

Dr. Irving Ribner has managed, in the face of increasingly impressive odds, a refreshing slant on that most researched of subjects, the playwright, Shakespeare. In his *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy*, most of its materials compiled while the author held a fellowship at Cambridge, he leads the reader into the too rarely traveled area wherein Shakespeare is appraised, not as a modern realist nor as the twentieth-century actor's abettor in slice-of-life naturalism, but as the poet spokesman of Elizabethan Christianity.

While retaining clearly distinctive values of its own, Doctor Ribner's work seems to supplement effectively Lily Campbell's *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes as Slaves of Passion* reviewed here nearly a year ago. As in the Campbell study, there is no leapfrogging among the generally regarded "great" plays but rather a clearly chronological line of the artist's development followed from the sadly Senecan *Titus Andronicus* to the frequently neglected majesty of *Coriolanus*. The newer book accents, as does the former, the profound influence upon Shakespeare of the demonstrative allegorical and wholly moral aspect of the literature and drama of his immediate forebears and teachers.

For "Tragedy," Ribner asserts, "is an exploration of man's relation to the forces of evil in the world. It seeks for answers to cosmic problems, much as religion seeks them." The connection between this basic belief in a moral order and its subsequent expression in progressively more perceptive and complex stage demonstrations seems an essential one yet curiously distasteful to many critics. Doctor Ribner makes the connection early and precisely, keeps it constant in analyzing the plays, and once again displays the antiquity in Shakespeare as every bit the crest of his greatness that the contemporary and the topical may appear.

James Foote
Mercy College, Detroit



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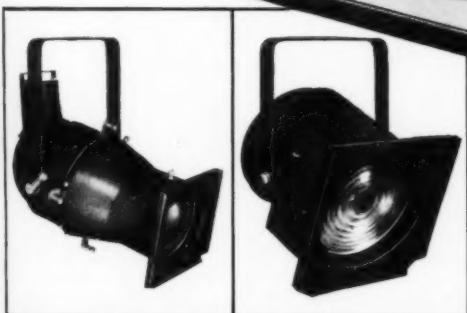
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